ISSUE 100 SPECIAL EDITION

HISTORY of WAR

EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW
1ST SAS VETERAN

MILITARY HISTORY HEROES

From defiant leaders to inspiring homefront valour: we celebrate brave wartime service across the centuries

FUTURE
ISSUE 100

KING VS KAISER
True story of how Belgium defied the 1914 invasion

UNKNOWN WARRIOR
How the symbol of the fallen received the highest honour

RUSSIAN "BEAR"
Why this Cold War era bomber is still deadlier than ever

KING & COUNTRY
UK AUTHORISED DEALER

1968 was a year full of war, protests and violent demonstrations. In Asia the year began with the TET Offensive, a surprise *North Vietnamese* and *Viet Cong* attack on more than 100 cities, towns and military outposts all across South Vietnam.

Elsewhere in the world huge public demonstrations, erupted in *London*, *Paris*, *Rome* and a dozen other major cities around the globe.

At the same time, ***The Rolling Stones*** recorded a great rock song that perfectly captured the turmoil of the era and provided the soundtrack to go along with it... *"Street Fighting Man"*.

'Street Fighting Men'

In America it was an increasingly turbulent election year where the sitting president, ***Lyndon B. Johnson***, suddenly said that he would not seek re-election and black, civil rights leader *Reverand Martin Luther King* and presidential candidate *Robert F. Kennedy* were both assassinated!

FIGHTING IN THE STREET

Here you can see a representative sample of *King & Country's* 1:30 scale, all-metal, hand-painted ***US Marines*** battling their way through the old imperial city of ***Hue*** during the height of the ***TET Offensive*** in February 1968.

THE K&C 'VIETNAM' SERIES

No other military miniature company has designed or produced as many or as diverse a collection of 1:30 scale, all-metal, hand-painted figures and fighting vehicles as *King & Country*.

The range and authentic detail of these scale model miniatures is second-to-none and provides collectors with a host of exciting and dramatic display opportunities.

For more details about this **'VIETNAM'** series or any of *King & Country's* many other fine historical ranges simply contact Britain's biggest and best authorized K&C dealer... *or be sure to check out our website!*

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MAGPIE OPENING TIMES
DAILY 9:00AM - 5:30PM
CLOSED WEDNESDAY & SUNDAY

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A team of fire watchers from Royal Northern Hospital in London practise putting out a blaze, September 1941

My grandma was a fire watcher in Manchester during the 1940 Blitz. She recalled long nights poised with a bucket of sand, waiting to snuff out blazes as the bombs dropped. One morning she found the shop she worked at was a pile of rubble. Horrific experiences of conflict like this were common for millions – and for many are still a reality. War has always produced great heroism, and it is these heroes that we wanted to celebrate in our hundredth issue. I'd also like to say thank-you to all our readers for your support over the years – here's to the next hundred!

Tim Williamson
Editor-in-Chief

CONTRIBUTORS

ALEC BORRIE

Tom Garner spoke with the veteran of 1st SAS Squadron about his memories serving behind enemy lines in France, 1944-45.

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OLIVIA SMITH

This issue Olivia spoke with Wren veteran Christian Lamb about her experiences serving on the home front and mapping out D-Day.

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WILLIAM WELSH

For the Great Battles this month William recounts the Siege of Rhodes – which pitted Ottoman forces against the Knights Hospitaller.

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JAMES HOLLAND

James joins our expert contributors for this special hundredth issue feature – celebrating our military history heroes.

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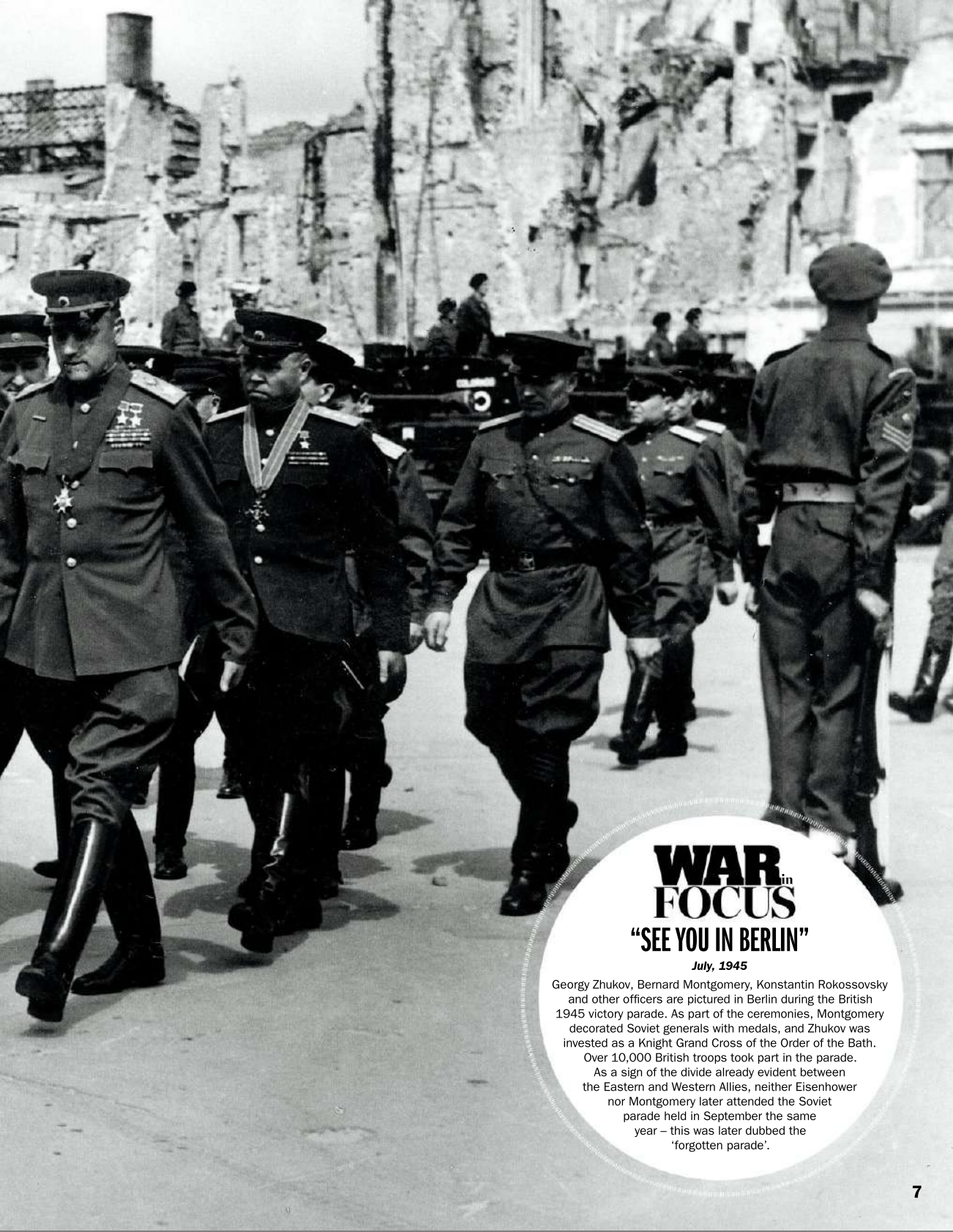

WAR in FOCUS

"SEE YOU IN BERLIN"

July, 1945

Georgy Zhukov, Bernard Montgomery, Konstantin Rokossovsky and other officers are pictured in Berlin during the British 1945 victory parade. As part of the ceremonies, Montgomery decorated Soviet generals with medals, and Zhukov was invested as a Knight Grand Cross of the Order of the Bath. Over 10,000 British troops took part in the parade. As a sign of the divide already evident between the Eastern and Western Allies, neither Eisenhower nor Montgomery later attended the Soviet parade held in September the same year – this was later dubbed the 'forgotten parade'.

WAR in FOCUS

WARDEN OF THE CINQUE PORTS

13 August 1946

Winston Churchill inspects the honour guard at Dover, wearing the uniform of the Warden of the Cinque Ports. Included on his uniform are his military medals and orders, many of which were awarded for service and conduct prior to the First World War. His earliest medal, received in 1895, was the Order of Military Merit for his part in the Cuban War of Independence. The US Distinguished Service Medal was awarded to Churchill as a result of his work as Munitions Minister during the First World War.

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WAR in FOCUS

AMERICAN HEROES

12 February, 1919

Nine American recipients of France's Croix-de-Guerre, awarded for heroism in combat, pose with their medals before beginning the journey home from Europe. All members of the 369th Infantry Regiment, in the front row left to right (from the original photograph caption): Eagle Eye, Ed Williams; Lamp Light, Herbert Taylor; Leon Fraitor; Kid Hawk, Ralph Hawkins. Back row, left to right: HD Prinas; Dan Storms; Kid Woney, Joe Williams; 'Kid Buck' Alfred Hanley and TW Taylor.

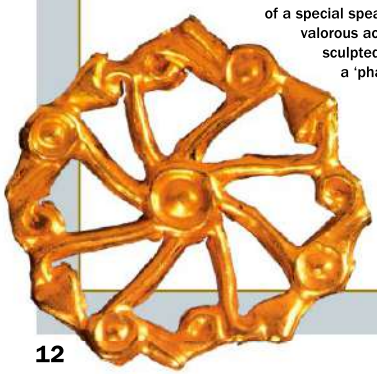
TIMELINE OF...

MILITARY DECORATIONS

Awards for acts of martial valour have a long international history that stretches back to ancient civilisations

ANCIENT AWARDS

Military decorations are first recorded in the Ancient Egyptian Old Kingdom with the 'Order of the Golden Collar'. The Romans award a 'Hasta Pura' decoration of a special spear for valorous acts or a sculpted disc called a 'phalera'.



A Roman phalera gold disc that is now exhibited in the State Oriental Art Museum, Moscow

MEDIEVAL ORDERS

European knights are often accepted into chivalric Orders for meritorious acts of personal military service. Common soldiers are excluded but can receive items of jewellery for acts of bravery.

Institutions such as England's Order of the Garter bestow members with insignia such as robes, badges, hats and other symbolic items that include the famous leg garter

16 June 1740

POUR LE MÉRITE

King Frederick II of Prussia creates a military and civil honour 'For Merit'. It becomes the most prestigious military award of the German Empire and becomes informally known as the 'Blue Max'. It is abolished in 1918 after Germany's defeat in WWI, although the civil award is still active.

The Pour le Mérite is not awarded for individual acts of bravery but for repeated acts of gallantry

A member of the Coldstream Guards holds the medals of Captain Cyril Frisby, including his Victoria Cross, following a Drumhead Service at Victoria Barracks, Windsor

Gustav III of Sweden creates the medal during the Russo-Swedish War of 1788-90 – a conflict that is deemed insignificant by both sides

FÖR TAPPERHET I FÄLT

The oldest military medal still in continuous use is the Swedish award 'For Valour in the Field'. It is instituted by King Gustav III of Sweden. Despite still being active, the medal has not been awarded since 1915 because of Sweden's long-standing policy of neutrality.

LÉGION D'HONNEUR

Napoleon's 'Legion of Honour' is based on old military Orders but is highly inclusive and awarded to French soldiers of all ranks for bravery or exceptional service. It is now France's highest order of merit for both military personnel and civilians.

The Légion d'honneur has five classes and is often awarded to Allied WWII veterans who fought on French soil from 1944

26 November 1769 — 28 May 1789 — 22 June 1792 — 19 May 1802

ORDER OF SAINT GEORGE

Established by Empress Catherine the Great, the Order is the highest military decoration in Russia. Only officers are eligible for the award and it is abolished following the Russian Revolution in 1917. However, it is revived by the Russian Federation on 8 August 2000.

The cross on the medal bears an image of Saint George on horseback slaying the dragon

VIRTUTI MILITARI

Poland's highest military decoration is created by King Stanisław II August. It is awarded in five classes for personal heroism or to commanders for leadership. Because of Poland's turbulent history, the medal has been abolished and reinstated several times.

The Virtuti Militari is inclusive and can be awarded to non-Polish military personnel or civilians in exceptional circumstances

All images: © Alamy

President Barack Obama meets Medal of Honor recipients in Arlington National Cemetery during National Medal of Honor Day, 25 March 2009

© Getty

"3,508 MEDALS HAVE BEEN AWARDED WITH MOST BEING PRESENTED BY THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES"

10 April 1816

WATERLOO MEDAL

Every British Army soldier who fights at the Battles of Waterloo, Quatre Bras and Ligny in 1815 is awarded a special medal. It is the first decoration issued by the British government to all soldiers present during an action, regardless of rank.

© Getty

Recipients of the Waterloo Medal include members of the King's German Legion – German soldiers who fight in the British Army because of the royal union between Britain and Hanover

29 January 1856

VICTORIA CROSS

Queen Victoria establishes the highest award in the British honours system to recognise acts of valour during the Crimean War. Only 1,358 VCs have been awarded to 1,355 people and the medal is conferred independently in Australia, Canada and New Zealand.

Each Victoria Cross is handmade from bronze traditionally taken from a captured Russian gun during the Crimean War

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MEDAL OF HONOR

The United States originally institutes the Medal of Honor for the Union Navy during the American Civil War. It is extended to the army in 1862 and finally the US Air Force in 1965. 3,508 medals have been awarded with most being presented by the President of the United States.

President Joe Biden presents the first Medal of Honor of his administration to Korean War veteran Colonel Ralph Puckett, 21 May 2021

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AUGUST THE FIRST MEDAL

China's highest military decoration is originally founded in 1955 to recognise members of the People's Liberation Army who fought during the Chinese Civil War. It is reinstated in 2017 by Xi Jinping with the addition of civilian recipients.

An honoured guest with medals on his coat watches a military parade in Beijing to commemorate the 70th anniversary of the end of WWII, September 2015

21 December 1861

16 April 1934-20 March 1992

26 January 1950

27 September 1955

HEROES OF RUSSIA

Russia's highest decoration for military valour is the Hero of the Russian Federation. Its predecessor is the Hero of the Soviet Union, established in 1934, but succeeded by its Federation equivalent in 1992.

The Hero of the Russian Federation medal is the same design as its Soviet predecessor but the communist red ribbon has been replaced with the colours of the Russian tricolour

Image source: Wiki / PD / RIA Novosti archive, image #470774 / Sergey Subbotin

PARAM VIR CHAKRA

Known in English as the 'Wheel of the Ultimate Brave', the Param Vir Chakra is India's equivalent of the Victoria Cross. Founded in 1950, it has only been awarded 21 times since its inception.

Three recipients of the Param Vir Chakra – Yogendra Singh Yadav, Bana Singh and Sanjay Kumar – pictured wearing their medals in 2014

Image source: Wiki / PD / Shiv Aroor

The Purple Heart, presented to American armed forces personnel killed or wounded in combat, is the nation's oldest military award

Opposite, left: *For wounds received in combat, an American soldier is presented the Purple Heart Medal at Coleman Army Barracks, Germany*

Opposite, right: *The Badge of Military Merit, instituted by General George Washington, became the forerunner of the Purple Heart medal*

© Alamy

THE PURPLE HEART

The oldest US military award traces its origin to General George Washington and the days of the American Revolution

"The General, ever desirous to cherish a virtuous ambition in his soldiers, as well as to foster and encourage every species of military merit, directs that whenever any singularly meritorious action is performed, the author of it shall be permitted to wear on his facings, over his left breast, the figure of a heart in purple cloth, or silk, edged with a narrow lace or binding."

So read the order from General George Washington, which established the Badge of Military Merit, forerunner of the Purple Heart, in the spring of 1782 as Britain's North American colonies neared their long-sought independence from the mother country. At the time, Washington's troops were nevertheless weary, disgruntled and on the verge of mutiny after suffering the privations of war for some years, and the general looked to bolster morale in any way possible. The authorisation became official on 7 August, and only three sergeants are known to have received the badge, presented by Washington himself.

By the time the American Revolution ended, the Badge of Military Merit had already begun to fade into 150 years of obscurity. Then, in 1932, General Douglas MacArthur, Chief of Staff of the Army, revived the decoration and christened it the Purple Heart. General Order No 3 became effective on 22 February, Washington's 200th birthday, and Army personnel who were wounded in combat or rendered meritorious service were eligible for the decoration. General MacArthur himself received the first modern Purple Heart.

Elizabeth Will, a heraldic specialist with the Army's Office of the Quartermaster General, completed the redesign of one of the most recognisable military medals in the world. The Purple Heart features a profile of General Washington below a shield of the general's coat of arms in two horizontal bars and three red stars. The ribbon is purple with white edging, and the reverse includes a raised bronze heart with the words "FOR MILITARY MERIT" inscribed below the coat of arms. Subsequent awards of the Purple Heart are denoted by the addition of an oak leaf cluster or star, worn on the ribbon.

"MORE THAN A MILLION SOLDIERS, SAILORS, AIRMEN AND MARINES WERE AWARDED THE PURPLE HEART DURING WORLD WAR II"

After the medal's authorisation, its award was made retroactive. Soldiers wounded during World War I and other conflicts dating as far back as the Civil War received the Purple Heart. Prior to US entry into World War II in December 1941, a total of 78,000 medals had been awarded. Through the years, the criteria for receiving the Purple Heart have been altered and sometimes expanded. Originally, civilians were eligible to receive the medal, but the practice was discontinued. The Purple Heart is also the highest US military award that the recipient is eligible for immediately when the criteria are realised. No recommendation from a superior officer or other proposal is required. Officially, the Purple Heart is awarded today in the name of the President of the United States to those members of the military who have been wounded or killed in action on or after 5 April 1917, the day before the nation entered World War I.

Initially, only Army personnel were eligible for the Purple Heart; however, during the early months of World War II further modifications were enacted. In the spring of 1942, the War Department authorised the award of the medal to any service member killed in action. With the creation of the Legion of Merit that September, the Purple Heart became an exclusive award to those wounded or killed while defending the United States against an enemy. Late in the year, President Franklin D Roosevelt extended to the US Navy Department the authority to award the Purple Heart to any Navy, Coast Guard or US Marine personnel wounded or killed in action on or after 7 December 1941, the date of the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor that had plunged the United States into the global conflict.

More than a million soldiers, sailors, airmen and Marines were awarded the Purple Heart during World War II from 1941-1945. The US government had ordered the manufacture of 1.5 million Purple Heart medals during the course of the war, anticipating tremendous casualties during the fighting in Europe and with the expected invasion of the Japanese homeland. However, the surplus did allow the presentation of the Purple Heart to continue, even in the field, during subsequent conflicts.

Nearly 119,000 Purple Hearts were awarded during the Korean War and over 350,000 in the Vietnam conflict. The wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, as well as other operations, have resulted in the presentation of more than 40,000 Purple Hearts in recent years. While a hierarchy of decorations for bravery in combat exists within the US military, no other award is as revered and instantly recognised as a symbol of sacrifice and suffering in wartime.

THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

TO ALL WHO SHALL SEE THESE PRESENTS, GREETING:

THIS IS TO CERTIFY THAT
THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
HAS AWARDED THE

PURPLE HEART

ESTABLISHED BY GENERAL GEORGE WASHINGTON
AT NEWBURGH, NEW YORK, AUGUST 7, 1782
TO

[illegible] FIRST CLASS GENE A. [illegible] UNITED STATES ARMY

FOR WOUNDS RECEIVED
IN ACTION

IN REPUBLIC OF KOREA ON 28 JANUARY 1953
GIVEN UNDER MY HAND IN THE CITY OF WASHINGTON
THIS 2ND DAY OF JANUARY 1954

THE ADJUTANT GENERAL

Images: Wiki / PD / Gov

THE DISTINGUISHED SERVICE ORDER - DSO

Instituted by Queen Victoria for officers who had performed meritorious or distinguished service, the DSO ranked only second behind the VC

Prior to the Crimean War, the British Army had no formal way of recognising bravery on the battlefield. Individuals could receive a promotion, or perhaps a mention in dispatches, but little else. This prompted the creation of a new award: the Victoria Cross for the most conspicuous acts of gallantry. However, it was soon felt that an additional award was needed to recognise courage that was still highly esteemed, but did not in itself justify a Victoria Cross. This prompted the creation of the Distinguished Service Order, on 6 September 1886.

The first recipients of the new medal were announced – as has become a tradition – in the pages of the *London Gazette*. Here, the names of the very first 16 recipients were published on Friday 26 November 1886. The action in which they distinguished themselves was at the Battle of Ginnis in Sudan, when a joint Anglo-Egyptian force fought a sharp action to relieve the trapped garrison of Fort Ginnis-Kosha. Some 400 of the Mahdi's Dervishes were killed for the loss of 10 men dead and 41 wounded. The battle was a resounding victory and, coincidentally, the last time that British troops would wear their famous red coats in battle – afterwards it was khaki all the way.

The men honoured in that first list were all officers, and this was deliberate. At the time the DSO was closed to other ranks, and only officers were eligible to receive it. This exclusion would remain in place for another century.

The medal itself is a silver-gilt cross with curved ends enamelled in white, and is 4.1 centimetres wide. In the centre is a green laurel wreath with the imperial crown in gold upon a red background. Laurel was chosen for its association since classical times with military victory. The medal's reverse side has the royal cipher of the reigning British monarch, with a ring at the top of the medal attaching to the bottom of a gilt suspension bar. The medal ribbon is red with narrow blue edges and is some 2.86 cm wide. Some recipients have been known to have their names engraved on the reverse of the suspension bar. All those awarded the medal are entitled to use the letters 'DSO' after their name, and are officially known as 'Companions of the Distinguished Service Order'. Every DSO since its inception has been made by the now-former Crown Jewellers, Messrs Garrard & Co.

***Right:** A Canadian Soldier with his Distinguished Service Order*

***Below:** The Distinguished Service Order was created in 1886*

Image: Wiki / PD / Gov

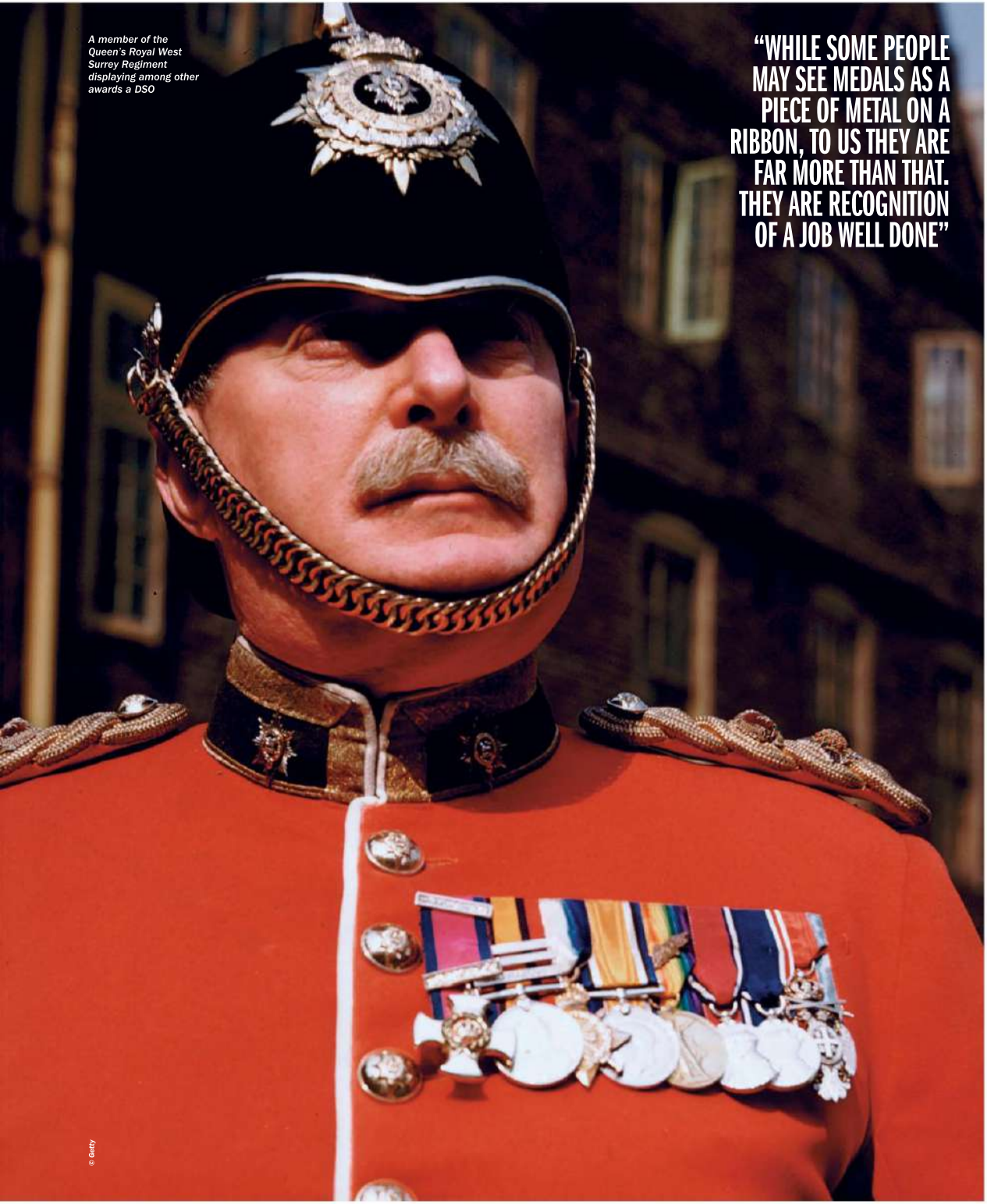
© Alamy

The DSO has undergone a number of changes since its creation; some cosmetic – such as the year of the award being engraved on the back of the suspension bar from 1938 onwards – and others material, such as the extension of possible recipients in 1942 out to officers of Britain's Merchant Navy, and the removal in 1943 of the rule that a DSO could only be awarded to someone who had previously been Mentioned in Dispatches.

However, without doubt the most significant and deserved change was made in 1993, when a review into the British honours system concluded that distinctions of rank should be abolished, so henceforth all ranks became eligible to receive a DSO. The award criteria was duly redefined as for "highly successful command and leadership during active operations". The DSO's place in the pecking order was also changed, with the new Conspicuous Gallantry Cross taking its place as the nation's second highest bravery award. While the move to 'democratise' the DSO was welcome, the fact remains that no non-commissioned rank has ever won it as yet.

Originally intended as a single honour, at the height of the First World War a change was made to permit ribbon bars to be authorised for subsequent awards – that's to say a particularly courageous individual could receive it more than once. Consequently, some 1,841 individuals have twice earned a DSO, and 16 hardy souls an astonishing four times, including the formidable New Zealander, Bernard Freyberg VC, and one of the founders of the Special Air Service (SAS), Blair 'Paddy' Mayne.

The DSO is still awarded today, with recent recipients fighting in the Gulf, Iraq and Afghanistan. Stuart Carver received his as commander of 1st Battalion the Royal Anglian Regiment – the 'Viking's – in Afghanistan. His citation read that his "impeccable judgement and personal example took the battalion through the complex and dangerous jungle-like zone." Stuart himself said, "I subscribe to the theory that any award to a commanding officer reflects on the whole battalion… While some people may see medals as a piece of metal on a ribbon, to us they are far more than that. They are recognition of a job well done…"



A member of the Queen's Royal West Surrey Regiment displaying among other awards a DSO

"WHILE SOME PEOPLE MAY SEE MEDALS AS A PIECE OF METAL ON A RIBBON, TO US THEY ARE FAR MORE THAN THAT. THEY ARE RECOGNITION OF A JOB WELL DONE"

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Władysław Sikorski, the 29th prime minister and commander-in-chief of Poland, presents a Polish fighter pilot with the Virtuti Militari on 29 October 1941

© Alamy

An example of the Virtuti Militari 1st Class 'Grand Cross', which is awarded to commanders-in-chief of the Polish Armed Forces

VIRTUTI MILITARI

Poland's highest military decoration is one of the oldest in the world, although it has a chequered history

Known in Polish as the 'Order Wojenny Virtuti Militari' ('War Order of Virtuti Militari'), Poland's highest decoration is literally awarded "For Military Virtue". Established on 22 June 1792, Virtuti Militari was founded by Stanisław II August, King of Poland and Grand Duke of Lithuania. The last monarch of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, Stanisław established the Order to commemorate Prince Józef Poniatowski's victory over the Russians at the Battle of Zielence. It initially consisted of two classes: an oval golden medal for officers, and a silver one for NCOs and privates. In the first year of its existence, it was awarded to 63 officers (including Poniatowski, who was its first recipient) and 290 NCOs and ordinary soldiers.

The medal was abolished in 1795 upon the dissolution of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, but was reinstated at the insistence of Poniatowski in 1806. Poland was then a client state of the First French Empire, and the Order was renamed the 'Military Medal of the Duchy of Warsaw'. Its recipients informally stuck to the original name, and it was the highest military decoration awarded to Polish soldiers who fought alongside France during the Napoleonic Wars.

During this period, Frederick August I, King of Saxony and Duke of Warsaw, issued a decree for the transformation of the Virtuti Militari into its present form. The original medals were gold or silver ovals, but the decree turned it into a cross. The Order was also divided into five classes, with the first three being reserved for high-ranking officers, from commanders-in-chief to majors. Classes IV and V are known as the Gold and Silver Cross respectively, and are awarded for battlefield success or personal courage and daring.

A 'Kingdom of Poland' was reinstated after 1815, although the Tsar of Russia acted as the Polish king. The Order was now known as the 'Polish Military Medal' before it officially reverted to its original name in 1831. However, in the same year, Tsar Nicholas I entrenched Russian rule and abolished the decoration following the 'November Uprising' in Poland. To add insult to injury, Nicholas used the exact design to introduce a 'Polish Sign of Honour' medal. However, this was only awarded to Russians who implemented tsarist rule in Poland.

When Poland finally regained her independence in 1918, the Virtuti Militari was fully restored by the Second Polish Republic. Thousands were awarded to recipients who fought in the First World War, as well as the Polish-Soviet War and Polish-Ukrainian War. They could also receive benefits such as discounted railway travel, medical care and the right to be provided with jobs by the state.

Although Poland was overrun by the Nazi and Soviet invasions of 1939, the Polish government-in-exile automatically continued awarding the Virtuti Militari for Polish soldiers who fought for the Western Allies during the Second World War. It was also used by Soviet-supported Polish forces that fought on the Eastern Front. This would prove important after the war, when the pro-Soviet People's Republic of Poland continued the award.

When communist rule was overthrown in Poland in 1989 at the end of the Cold War, the Order was regarded with some controversy. During the communist era, some awards had been given to recipients who had participated in the torture and killing of Polish anti-communists. In July 1990, President Wojciech Jaruzelski even posthumously revoked the medal given to Soviet premier Leonid Brezhnev in 1974. Since 1989, there have been no new recipients of the Virtuti Militari.

HONORARY AWARDS

The Virtuti Militari was awarded to Allied commanders of many different nationalities during the Second World War

During WWII, the government-in-exile of the Second Polish Republic extended the award of the Virtuti Militari to non-Polish recipients in an honorary capacity. It was given to senior Allied commanders such as Dwight D. Eisenhower and Bernard Montgomery, who extensively worked alongside Poland's exiled armed forces, but it was also awarded to more controversial recipients.

The medal was awarded to Marshal Georgy Zhukov, despite the fact that the Soviet Union had invaded and carved up Poland along with Nazi Germany in 1939. It was also given to French commander Jean de Lattre de Tassigny, a general who initially served Vichy France and briefly fought against the Allies in North Africa before defecting to the Free French. The Virtuti Militari was additionally awarded to the Yugoslavian Serb guerrilla fighter Draža Mihailovic, who fought against occupying Axis forces in the Balkans.

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Montgomery, Eisenhower, Zhukov and de Lattre (left to right) were all honorary recipients of the Virtuti Militari

NELSON'S 'ORDERS'

When he was mortally wounded in 1805, the celebrated admiral was wearing embroidered insignias of chivalric orders from several nations – awarded to him for valiant wartime service

When Vice-Admiral Lord Horatio Nelson was killed during his greatest triumph at the Battle of Trafalgar in 1805 he was wearing a splendid uniform coat. Made of colourful and high-quality material, the coat still bears the bullet hole that pierced Nelson's left shoulder, fatally wounding him. It has been suggested that the admiral made himself a highly visible target by wearing four replica embroidered insignias of chivalric orders.

In an age when military decorations for gallantry were in their infancy, Nelson was awarded three 'Naval Gold Medals' by the Royal Navy. Granted to senior British naval officers for specific actions, Nelson was awarded the medals for the battles of Cape St. Vincent, the Nile and (posthumously) Trafalgar. He therefore viewed being inducted into prestigious chivalric orders as a much greater achievement. However, this pride may have inadvertently caused his death.

ORDER OF SAINT FERDINAND AND OF MERIT

The Order of Saint Ferdinand and of Merit was established by King Ferdinand IV of Naples and III of Sicily on 1 April 1800. Naples was the more dominant of Ferdinand's two kingdoms and he established the Order to award those who performed important favours or acts of loyalty to him. Nelson had supported Ferdinand when Naples was at war with France in 1798 and he was subsequently awarded with the Order's highest rank: Knight of the Grand Cross. Nelson was also the first person to receive the Grand Cross.

ORDER OF THE BATH

Awarded for victory against the Spanish at the Battle of Cape St. Vincent in February 1797, the Order of the Bath is the fourth-most senior British chivalric order. Founded by King George I in 1725, the Bath replicates the medieval ceremony of appointing a new knight by bathing him as a symbol of purification. Nelson wore his Bath insignia at the top of his uniform in deference to his primary allegiance to the British Crown. In Nelson's time, the Bath only consisted of one military class, although civilians can now join the Order.

© Alamy

Nelson's Trafalgar uniform is displayed complete with his chivalric insignia, a sewn-up right sleeve and the infamous bullet hole below his left epaulette

ORDER OF THE CRESCENT

Sultan Selim III of the Ottoman Empire specially created the Order of the Crescent in 1799 to recognise Nelson's victory at the Battle of the Nile. This was because the other existing Ottoman Orders could not be awarded to non-Muslims at the time. Nelson was extremely proud that the sultan had created a new order specifically for him but the insignia is curiously sewn on the wrong way round. Later recipients of the Order were usually British or French naval officers. Of the four orders represented on Nelson's uniform, the Crescent is the only one that is no longer awarded.

ORDER OF SAINT JOACHIM

Founded in the Holy Roman Empire in 1755, the Order of Saint Joachim was, and remains, a progressive institution that practises tolerance towards all religions. Originally comprised of Protestant and Catholic noblemen, the Order was unique at a time when Europe had been divided by religious conflict for centuries. Nelson was offered membership of the Order in 1801 to recognise his victory at the Battle of the Nile in August 1798. He had to receive official approval from the College of Arms in order to accept and wear the Order's insignia.

Image: Wiki / PD / Art

Nelson was fond of wearing his medals and chivalric insignias, which can be seen in this grand 1799 portrait of the admiral by Lemuel Francis Abbott

CHURCHILL'S MEDALS

Britain's wartime prime minister received many medals for his various military services prior to WWII

During a very long career that lasted from the 1890s until the 1960s, Winston Churchill was the recipient of 37 orders, decorations and medals. This included the Nobel Prize for Literature and honorary citizenship of the United States, but Churchill always had a fascination and yearning for military recognition.

Although the majority of Churchill's awards recognised his service as a British government minister, particularly during WWII, several medals were for his active service as a British Army officer during his early life. His intermittent military career during 1893-1924 as a regular and Territorial soldier saw him fight across the globe during the Cuban War of Independence, the Northwest Frontier, Mahdist War, Second Boer War and WWI.

Image: Alamy

Churchill pictured wearing some of his medals during WWI, including the Cross of Military Merit, Queen's Sudan Medal and Queen's South African Medal

ORDER OF MILITARY MERIT

Churchill first saw action when he acted as a military observer alongside the Spanish during the Cuban War of Independence in 1895. He was awarded the Cross of the Order of Military Merit by Spain and later the Cuban Volunteer Campaign Medal in 1914.

INDIA MEDAL

Awarded to officers and men in the British and Indian armies, the India Medal was issued to personnel for minor campaigns, primarily on the Northwest Frontier during 1895 to 1902. Churchill received a clasp for his medal for serving in the Malakand Field Force during 1897.

MAHDIST MEDALS

Authorised in 1899, the Queen's Sudan Medal was awarded to British and Egyptian forces that took part in the Anglo-Egyptian Conquest of Sudan. Churchill charged with the 21st Lancers during the Battle of Omdurman when he was working as a journalist for *The Morning Post*. He was also awarded the Egyptian Khedive's Sudan Medal.

QUEEN'S SOUTH AFRICA MEDAL

Churchill served as a journalist and cavalryman in the South Africa Light Horse during the Second Boer War. He was also captured by the Boers before he successfully escaped from Pretoria. His campaign medal has six clasps for being present at actions at Diamond Hill, Johannesburg, the Relief of Ladysmith, Orange Free State, Tugela Heights and the Cape Colony.

WWI MEDALS

Although Churchill served as First Lord of the Admiralty at the beginning of WWI, he served as a combat soldier on the Western Front after overseeing the disastrous Gallipoli Campaign. He was therefore eligible to receive the 1914-15 Star, British War Medal and Victory Medal.

DISTINGUISHED SERVICE MEDAL

Churchill was awarded this US decoration for his civilian service as British Minister of Munitions during 1917-19. The United States considered Churchill's work to be of "valuable service to the American Expeditionary Forces" on the Western Front.

CROSS OF LIBERTY

This unique medal was awarded to individuals who helped Estonia gain her independence in 1920. Churchill received his for being a key advocate of Allied intervention in the Russian Civil War to help facilitate the freedom of the Baltic States.

Images: Alamy, Wiki / PD / Hoq7276

OUR MILITARY HISTORY HEROES

To mark History of War's 100th issue, we asked our expert contributors to share the story of the person who has inspired them most as military historians. Whether for actions on the battlefield, bravery on the homefront, or tenacity as a leader, there are many different ways people have left their mark on conflicts of the past. They are inspiring examples of human potential, achievement and personal sacrifice, born in the horrific environments that armed conflict creates. Their stories continue to inspire across the centuries.

DWIGHT D. EISENHOWER

WORDS: ANDREW MICHAEL E. HASKEW

During the course of a long and illustrious military career, General Dwight D. Eisenhower came to intimately understand the deep responsibility – the heavy burden – of command. On the eve of Operation Overlord, the Allied invasion of Normandy during World War II, he carried the proverbial weight of the world on his shoulders.

Outwardly, Eisenhower was an optimist, but he knew that the D-Day landings could end in abject failure. Should the outcome be a reversal, he was prepared to shoulder the responsibility for a defeat that carried with it catastrophic consequences. Just in case, he scribbled a succinct statement for release to the media.

"Our landings in the Cherbourg-Havre area have failed to gain a satisfactory foothold and I have withdrawn the troops," he wrote on the eve of the greatest military endeavour in modern history. "My decision to attack at this time and place was based upon the best information available. The troops, the air and the Navy did all that Bravery and devotion to duty could do. If any blame or fault attaches to the attempt it is mine alone."

The decision to commit 150,000 men, 5,000 ships and countless aircraft to the liberation of Western Europe from Nazi oppression was indeed his alone. In the face of a determined enemy and horrific weather, Eisenhower gathered his lieutenants at Southwick House in the early hours of 5 June 1944, and asked each officer in turn whether the invasion should be postponed, or if they should forge ahead the following day in the face of tremendous risk.

At the conclusion of the meeting, Eisenhower announced, "Okay, we'll go!" The supreme commander placed the note that would convey the unthinkable in his wallet, and later gave it to a young officer as a memento, relieved that even though much blood and toil lay ahead, that it was never necessary to publish the damnable words.

Eisenhower was born in Denison, Texas, on 14 October 1890, and spent most of his youth in the town of Abilene, Kansas. From a humble beginning in the heartland of the U.S, he secured an appointment to the United States Military Academy at West Point, New York, initially more interested in an education at the expense of the taxpayer and the opportunity to play American football than pursue a career in the U.S. Army.

However, he rose to the highest echelon of military command, and proved himself the master of coalition warfare during World War II. As the Supreme Commander of the Allied Expeditionary Force, Eisenhower constantly walked a diplomatic tightrope while British and American commanders, particularly General George S. Patton, Jr and Field Marshal Bernard Montgomery, vied for the fleeting glory offered in newspaper headlines of the day. He made tough decisions, placing the necessity for cooperation and ultimate victory over Hitler and the Nazis above national pride and self-aggrandisement.

Eisenhower later inspired the confidence of the American people in his ability to lead them through the earliest days of the Cold War, and was twice elected President of the United States. He never shrank from a challenge, but discharged his duty with an earnest will and an unforgettably broad grin. He was easy to like.

In every instance, Dwight Eisenhower placed the success of the mission ahead of any personal reward or gain. In doing so, he defined leadership by example, and shouldered the tremendous responsibility that came with it like no other individual in the 20th century.

© Getty

General Dwight D. Eisenhower led Allied forces to victory in Europe during World War II

DEREK HURLSTONE ALLEN

WORDS: ANDREW ROY SAUNDERS

Inside the period of just one week during May 1940, 21-year-old Flying Officer Derek Hurlstone Allen of Leicester went from inexperienced combat pilot to an 'ace' with five victories and a gallantry decoration while serving with the Hurricane-equipped 85 Squadron at Lille-Seclin. The unit's Operations Record Book set the scene for the start of the 'Blitzkrieg' on 10 May:

"…Intermittently, throughout the day, as each section and flight landed, the pilots and aircraft were on the ground only long enough to allow re-arming and re-fuelling and so it went on from dawn to dusk; by the end of the day, the squadron had a total bag of seventeen aircraft to their credit with the loss of two of our aircraft."

In one of those actions, Allen experienced his first taste of battle north-west of Armand, claiming a one-third victory over a Junkers 88. Once 'blooded' in combat, it was the start of a short but meteoric career that also saw him escape with his life during a patrol over Belgium on 15 May:

"Fg Off Allen, Fg Off Pace and Plt Off Ashton failed to return from a patrol over Belgium. Allen had to bale-out when his machine was set on fire as a result of unequal combat against odds."

Allen did not make it back it back to his squadron until the following day, but exhaustion was taking its toll, and on the evening of 17 May, Derek and another pilot, Fg Off 'Piney' Lepine, were taken to dinner by an American war correspondent, who wrote:

"…both boys were red eyed from lack of sleep and dozed over their meal."

Neither pilot made it beyond breakfast next day, both being shot down between Le Cateau and Cambrai at around 6.30am. Lepine baled out and was taken prisoner, but of Allen there was no trace. Save for a telegram notifying his parents he had failed to return, there was no further news.

As it turned out, he had in fact been found and buried in Poix-du-Nord cemetery, but not identified. Instead, his headstone recorded him as an officer of the RAF who died on 18 May 1940, who was 'Known unto God'.

In 2011, following research by this author, it emerged that the mayor of Poix-du-Nord recorded the crash of Hurricane P2555 on 18 May 1940, its pilot being buried in the town's CWGC plot. It was a vital clue, because P2555 was the Hurricane in which Derek Allen had been lost.

As a result, the headstone was replaced with a named marker, and a moving re-dedication ceremony attended by the pilot's family members. Quite literally, Derek Allen had been given back his name.

Derek joined the RAF on a Short Service Commission on 5 July 1937, training at 5 FTS, RAF Sealand, before joining 85 Squadron in February 1938 and promoted to Fg Off on 10 December 1939. While combat reports for Allen have not been traced, he scored the following confirmed victories:

1 X HS 126 (10 MAY 1940)
1/3 X JU 88 (10 MAY 1940)
1/3 X DO 17 (11 MAY 1940)
2 X HE 111 (13 MAY 1940)
1 X JU 87 (15 MAY 1940)

Not long after Derek's disappearance, the *London Gazette* announced the award of Distinguished Flying Cross:

"Flying Officer Allen has taken part in all combats with Flight Lieutenant R H A Lee, following his section leader with great loyalty. He took part in shooting down a Junkers, and the next day another aircraft of the same type. After his aircraft had been severely damaged by anti-aircraft fire, he did not hesitate to attack a Junkers 87 over enemy territory and shoot it down."

Derek Allen, the lost and 'unknown ace', is this writer's hero.

***Below:** Derek Hurlstone Allen was aged just 21 when he became an RAF pilot 'ace'*
***Below right:** Depiction of air combat over France*

Image: Andrew Saunders

© Getty

GUSTAVE GHIOT

WORDS: DR BERNARD WILKIN

When I was a child, I often talked about the war with my grandfather, lieutenant-colonel Armand Ghiot, who fought in the Belgian army during World War II, and was captured in June 1940. His stories were fascinating, but I was immediately captivated when he told me about his own father, my great-grandfather, Gustave Ghiot.

Gustave Ghiot was born on 4 June 1893 in Couture-Saint-Germain, a few miles from the battlefield of Waterloo. A conscript in the Belgian army in 1913, he was serving in the 4th company, 3rd battalion, 13th regiment of line infantry when World War I broke out.

Fighting since the first days of the conflict, he was evacuated for illness on 1 March 1915. He was transferred to the 19th regiment of line infantry on 25 December 1915. He rose through the ranks, and became a sergeant in 1917. On 29 November 1917, he was in a night raid in the trenches with his section when they got hit by artillery fire.

Despite receiving a shrapnel wound in the leg, he went back and forth to save his injured men. For this action, he was awarded the croix de guerre with palm on 13 December 1917. He was evacuated to a military hospital and sent to France to recover. Back in the trenches on 23 January 1918, he took part in the victorious offensive at the end of the war, and was decorated several times, receiving among others the highest Belgian award: the Order of Leopold. At the end of the conflict, he was sent with his unit to occupy the Rhineland. He was demobilised on 30 September 1919, having served for six years, and returned to his village, where he worked as a carpenter. He died in 1971.

Despite never having the chance of meeting him, I was able to research his career in the archives. Thanks to this early interest in his life, I became fascinated by World War I, and decided to study history at University.

Image: Bernard Wilkin

JULIEN BRYAN

WORDS: DR ROBERT LYMAN FRHISTS

The full horror of modern warfare, in which defenceless civilians were targeted by the full range of industrialised killing power for the first time – from high-flying bombers, to rockets and artillery – was brilliantly captured by the American journalist Julien Bryan in Warsaw between 7-21 September 1939. Bryan's films and photographs provided the world with a shocking window into the horror of the militarisation of hatred unleashed by the Wehrmacht against a hapless Poland that acted as the curtain-opener for a war that would eventually see up to 85 million people lose their lives.

A series of photographs of one terrible incident on 13 September captured the shock and incredulity on the face of a Polish girl, Kazimiera Mika, as she stood over the dead body of her elder sister. Innocently picking potatoes in a field outside the capital with six others, the girl and one other had been struck down by marauding Luftwaffe fighters. It was as if the pilots had been deliberately looking for defenceless civilians to kill, their aim clearly to sow terror. Kazimiera's distraught expression captures the agony of sudden, unexpected and bloody bereavement.

The Mika girls were innocents caught up in a war foisted on the world by Germany's aggressive, racist fanaticism, an ideological disease artfully combined by the Nazis with the concept of Grosse Deutschland – the notion that Germany's borders were defined not by geography, but by blood. This was fatally combined with the pacific imbecility of the Western democracies, unable to comprehend the evil that lay at the heart of both fascist and communist polity in the 1930s. In Kazimiera's face is captured the visceral inhumanity of a new type of warfare, in which the twin aim was the eradication of some races and the enslavement of others.

It wasn't as if the world was unaware of the prospect of ruinous war brought about by German polity under Hitler: Europe and the world had been talking about little else since 1933, debating whether the aggressive racial nationalism of the Nazi Party augured good or evil for European peace and stability. As I have demonstrated in my book, *Under A Darkening Sky*, only a few – a brave few, mainly Americans – reported from within what Erik Larson describes as the Garden of the Beast to forewarn of war.

Image: Wiki / PD / Gov

R. Abiroy

Bryan's famous photo shows 10-year-old Kazimiera Mika mourning the death of her sister, Poland 1939

Bryan had been travelling on holiday in Romania when the Germans attacked on 1 September 1939. Six days later, he made his way into Warsaw, a city of 1.3 million inhabitants facing the brunt of air and, before long, artillery attacks, arriving in the pre-dawn darkness of a city under siege. "I arrived" he later wrote, "to find that not only the Polish Government had fled the city, but all the foreign correspondents as well. For two weeks, I photographed the citizens of Warsaw as they fought with heroism but futility against a powerful enemy. It was a new kind of war in which civilians, not the military, were the prime targets."

Bryan immediately recognised the uniqueness of what he could see all around him: buildings with their innards scooped out by explosions, their inhabitants killed or made homeless, wheeling the push-chairs and barrows containing all that remained of their possessions in search of safety. This was a war deliberately waged by a totalitarian state against the innocent. Writing in 1940, long before such horrors became commonplace, he noted that "I was in a city about to face perhaps the worst siege of all modern history."

He knew instinctively that his task, as the only remaining foreign journalist in the city, was to make a record of what he could see, and show the world what lebensraum really meant: the ejection by violence on racial grounds of an undeserving and inferior tribe by a racially pure master race. "I was not making a travelogue," he wrote. For two weeks, accompanied by a Polish translator, Stefan Radlinski, he walked the streets with a still and a cine camera, capturing in a series of unforgettable images the human tragedy of a war targeted at civilians. There were no pictures in those he took of soldiers on the battlefield. Instead, they were of children, like Kazimiera Mika, standing shocked over the lifeless bodies of their sisters, mothers and friends.

Thanks to Bryan's courage, those shocking images of murder serve as permanent reminders of the deliberate brutality that was the hallmark of this most terrible of wars.

WILFRED OWEN

WORDS: GRACE FREEMAN

Wilfred Owen was aged 25 when he died, just one week before the signing of the Armistice that would end World War I. He was killed in action by enemy fire while leading his men of the 2nd Manchester Regiment across the Sambre-Oise Canal in northern France. His mother Susan received the fated telegram as Shrewsbury bells rang in celebration on 11 November 1918. While just five of Owen's poems were published during his short lifetime, his legacy in literature today is remarkable, and he is widely regarded as the finest war poet of the Great War.

Owen was first sent to France in 1916 as a second lieutenant, before he returned with shell-shock and spent time recuperating at Edinburgh's Craiglockhart War Hospital. As his philosophy on the futility of combat evolved – mostly under the tutelage of fellow bard Siegfried Sassoon – so did his verse; he wrote keenly and candidly, expressing the horrors of the trenches with a sharp and devastating beauty influenced by his love of Romanticism.

I was introduced to Owen inside a Lincolnshire classroom by a dear and formative teacher whose literary passions shaped so many of my own, and I was besotted at first read. My infatuation grew on a school trip to the scarred landscape of the Somme: a tour of the old frontline, peppered with poetry recitals at notable landmarks, often at the side of their author. A deviating trip to the small village of Ors, Owen's final resting place among his comrades, was on the itinerary, and I still remember how much of a pilgrimage that first visit to his gravesite felt. It still does whenever I journey there now.

A joy of poetry isn't only that it can make us feel, but that it can teach us something, too, and Owen's work is a stunning lens through which to see the most monstrous of conflicts, over a century after its occurrence. Whatever else I might read to understand the Great War, I always and unfailingly return to Owen: he is, for me, an unparalleled voice for that moment in history.

HARRIET TUBMAN

WORDS: ALEX BOWERS

Harriet Tubman is an iconic figure in the American abolitionist movement, having escaped enslavement in 1849 before becoming a 'conductor' in the Underground Railroad. Her role in transporting at least 70 Black people from the South and, ultimately, out of bondage, is in itself worthy of her likeness soon appearing on U.S. currency. Less known, perhaps, is her outstanding performance of duty during the American Civil War, first as a cook and nurse, then as a scout and spy, prior to being the first woman to lead an armed expedition in the United States, guiding the 1863 raid at Combahee Ferry.

Born into a world of unquestionable cruelty and overt racism, Tubman – formerly named Araminta Ross while still enslaved – was no stranger to conflict. As a child, a white overseer struck her in the head with an iron weight, a wound that almost killed her, and caused fainting spells that would last for the rest of her life. But the incident, historians today claim, brought her closer to God, as soon after, she began experiencing strange visions she deemed to be premonitions from the Almighty. These vivid hallucinations likely helped inform her courageousness when she escaped the slave state of Maryland to the free state of Pennsylvania. She eventually returned a total of 19 times, often in disguise, to retrieve friends, family members and numerous others. Such was her heroics, even before the Civil War, that she earned the nickname of 'Moses of her people'.

It would be a name ascribed to her once more when, on 1-2 June 1863, partnered with Colonel James Montgomery, Tubman led around 300 men – the bulk of who were the Second South Carolina Volunteers, a Black regiment – onto gunboats and into Confederate-held territory. The objectives were simple: clear enemy defences, including river torpedoes (mines), seize supplies and destroy plantations. Additionally, a plan was drawn to encourage healthy adult Black males, freed from their supposed masters, to join the Union Army. This was where Tubman's trustworthiness, as opposed to Federal officers' lack of standing among the locals, would serve the mission well.

"SHE EARNED THE NICKNAME OF 'MOSES OF HER PEOPLE'"

Despite Tubman's inability to read, she stored all relevant intelligence in her mind, enabling her to guide the ships safely towards strategic points near the shore. The vessels split up early in the morning of 2 June, when she took her 150 men towards the awaiting fugitives who, through Tubman's secretive networks, had been informed of the raiding party's arrival. What happened next could be described as a mass exodus. Hundreds of enslaved Black people – men, women and children – charged towards the waterline seeking their freedom. Harriet Tubman later said, "Some had bags on their backs with pigs in them; some had chickens tied by the legs, and so [there were] children squalling, chickens squawking and pigs squealing… They all come running to the gunboats through the rice fields. They reminded me of the children of Israel coming out of Egypt."

More than 700 escaped slavery during the raid, yet for too long, Tubman's efforts went largely unrecognised and woefully under-compensated. Denied a sizeable proportion of her wartime payment fundamentally due to her being a woman, it is only now that the U.S. Government is starting to make amends. As a UK-based American Civil War re-enactor for the Southern Skirmish Association (SOSKAN), I feel it is imperative that Harriet Tubman is held in high esteem not only for her influence in American legislature and activism, but as a skilled tactician and military co-ordinator – not to mention her service in later life to the American suffrage movement. Whether even that's enough is another question.

STANLEY CHRISTOPHERSON

WORDS: JAMES HOLLAND

It's very hard to choose just one hero when I have so many. I'm a massive fan of Field Marshal Alexander, for example, a brilliant man who, I think, has been rather under-appreciated in recent times. So too has General Sir Francis Tuker, perhaps the greatest army commander Britain never had (for a variety of complex but regrettable reasons). Or how about that fearless American fighter pilot, Don Blakeslee, commander of the outstanding 4th Fighter Group? Or so many others? It's an impossible task.

But I'm going to choose someone barely known at all: Lieutenant-Colonel Stanley Christopherson, who commanded the Sherwood Rangers Yeomanry during the last eleven months of the war against Nazi Germany, and brilliantly so too, despite some 43 per cent of those serving in the regiment's tanks being killed during that time, and even though a huge number of tank crews became casualties. Somehow, he managed to keep them all going, maintain morale, keep hold of his humanity and kindness, stay smiling and laughing, and at the same time do the very best for his men.

Christopherson had worked in South Africa and then in the City as a stockbroker before the war. He was charming, affable and very bright, and got on with everyone, no matter what walk of life they came from. With war looming, he and several friends joined the Inns of Court Yeomanry, and then, at the outbreak of war, was posted to the Sherwood Rangers, who were at the time mostly drawn from the shires of Nottinghamshire and Lincolnshire. In early 1940, he and the regiment were posted to Palestine – with their horses – and even took part in a sabres-drawn cavalry charge against Arab insurrectionists. Yet times were changing, and before long their horses were taken away and they temporarily became gunners, considered massively infra dig by most of the regiment. It was as a gunner that Christopherson – and more than half the regiment – were posted to Tobruk and took part in the siege of 1941, although by the autumn of that year they were back in Egypt, and beginning the transformation into an armoured regiment. It had taken this long to get enough tanks produced and out to the Middle East.

An army bugler of the Nottinghamshire (Sherwood Rangers) Yeomanry sounding reveille at camp

© Getty

At this point, Christopherson and others all started to realise the importance of training hard and trying to become the very best soldiers they could. This also appealed to Christopherson's competitive instinct, but by the Battle of Alam el Halfa at the end of August 1942, he was a Squadron commander and licking his men into shape. They subsequently performed brilliantly at Alamein and throughout the rest of the North Africa campaign. By its end, the Sherwood Rangers were among the best and most experienced armoured regiments in the British Army, which was why they were earmarked for D-Day.

They landed on Gold Beach on 6 June 1944 and within four days had lost two commanding officers, with one fatally. On 11 June, Christopherson took command, determined to introduce a new style of leadership: one that was firm but compassionate, realistic but optimistic, and in which every voice and every life counted. Their reputation proceeded them as a regiment that was unflinching, courageous, determined and prepared to stick at it, no matter how tough the situation. They were the only armoured regiment to be attached to two US divisions, for example, largely down to Christopherson's tact, charm and willingness to co-operate. There was a reason why the Sherwood Rangers became the single unit in the British Army with more battle honours than any other, and that was because they were in the most battles.

Through it all, Christopherson kept his sense of humour, love of the ridiculous and his humanity, noticing a first snowdrop in spring, putting on a Christmas party for the children of the Dutch town in which they were billeted, and steering his men through among the most brutal, violent and challenging fighting any British unit had to face in the entire final 11 months of the war. His men adored him. "He was a very great man," said John Semken, one of his squadron commanders. "I just don't know how he kept going. I don't know how he did it." He was certainly a proper hero.

TONY BORGNIS

WORDS: JON TRIGG

The 1st Battalion of the Royal Anglian Regiment – the Vikings – is one of the highly professional county infantry regiments, and the mainstay of the British Army. In Afghanistan in 2007, they went through hell.

On 8 April 2007, the Vikings arrived in Helmand province, Afghanistan, as part of the British Herrick 6 deployment. The six months that followed would be described by their commanding officer, Stuart Carver DSO, as "the most demanding tour conducted by this Battalion in living memory." At its end, the soldiers from the wide flat lands of East Anglia had fired a staggering 1,067,150 bullets and killed over 1,000 Taliban fighters, but the cost was high. From a roll call of some 715 men, the battalion suffered 155 casualties, of which nine were killed in action and 61 wounded.

The 150 men of B Company would be led on the tour by 36-year-old Major Anthony 'Tony' Borgnis. Tony was an imposing figure; tall, lean (well, skinny really), and incredibly fit, he had a reputation as an officer who got things done. Having graduated from Exeter University, he'd joined the Army in September 1993 and passed out of Sandhurst before being commissioned into 1 R Anglian. That's where I met him. I was a lieutenant in the Vikings at the time, and I liked him instantly – we've been friends ever since. Tony was devoted to his soldiers, and it showed. Pretty soon he was earmarked for promotion, landing the plum job of commanding Reconnaissance Platoon – 'Recce' – and on later being appointed Officer Commanding (OC) B Company, he thought he'd won the lottery. Leading a rifle company in Britain's Army is a rare privilege, and on being warned off for a tour in Afghanistan, Tony pushed himself incredibly hard to get ready, often being away from home and putting an immense strain on his young family, and especially his beloved boys, Max and Charlie.

In Afghanistan, Tony led his men in a vicious series of battles, marvelling at his soldiers; "… so young and so very brave, it's humbling to talk to them about their experiences and feelings."

In Operation Lastay Kulang, Tony and his men fought the Taliban north of the hotly disputed town of Sangin. 11 days of hellish fighting left around 200 Taliban dead, but in what Tony would describe as "the lowest point of the tour", Lance-Corporal George Davey was killed and 14 other members of B Company wounded. With sheer determination, Tony picked up his men's spirits up and led them on. Their next operation saw the Company fighting the Taliban for five straight days in temperatures of 55 degrees centigrade and almost hand to hand. Six men were wounded by an RPG strike, and in the words of one soldier; "everyone I spoke to wanted to call it quits." But they didn't – Tony wouldn't let them. They fought on.

Based around the huge Kajaki dam, Tony was tasked with dominating the area through aggressive patrolling, with him and his men constantly out on the ground and coming under fire at every turn. With the Taliban using fortress-like family compounds to ambush them, there was little choice but to call in airstrikes and clear each compound at bayonet point. It was grim work, but the Company was holding its own until Thursday 23 August 2007, when tragedy struck. An airstrike went wrong, and three young privates, Aaron 'Troy' McClure, Robert 'Fozzy' Foster and John Thrumble, were killed, and two other men seriously injured. Incidents like that destroy units, and the fact that this one didn't and the Company fought bravely on for another two months is testimony to the leadership of Tony Borgnis.

On returning home, he hugged his two young sons – the centre of his world – so hard he thought they might break. However, Afghanistan left its mark. Tony left the Army in September 2012. Typical of the man, he bears no ill-will to his former enemies or the politicians who must take on so much responsibility. A quiet man now, he carries the burden of that tour on his shoulders – like so many veterans of that terrible war, he is truly an unsung hero.

Major Tony Borgnis [head bowed] with his men in Guildford, preparing to march through the town to celebrate their homecoming from Afghanistan

© Alamy

SEXTUS JULIUS FRONTINUS

WORDS: MURRAY DAHM

Sextus Julius Frontinus is not a name many people would associate with military heroes. To me, however, he more than qualifies. If he is known to readers at all, it is as the author of a collection of stratagems (the Stratagemata) and a handbook on the Roman aqueducts. These literary works came at the end of Frontinus' career, at the close of the 1st century AD. Prior to that, Frontinus had served as a soldier and commander probably since the reign of the emperor Claudius in the 50s A.D. The first mention of Frontinus in the surviving sources is on 1 January AD 70, but he must have shown he was a man of great potential prior to that, because his rise from that New Year's Day onwards was meteoric.

He probably had experience in commanding a legion in the east under Nero and the year of the four emperors in A.D. 69. Vespasian entrusted him to command another legion in A.D. 70, he was consul by 73 – at a remarkably young age. He then went on to become the governor of Britain for four years, and continued the conquest of the island. He was then governor of Germany, and commanded in Domitian's war against the Chatti in the early 80s, followed by command in Domitian's war against the Dacians in the mid-80s. Frontinus then held the office of Proconsul Asiae in A.D. 86 – this was the highest and most prestigious post a senator could hold. In that office, he seems to have thwarted a potential war with Parthia, using only limited resources at his disposal. It was usual that a senator retire after such a prestigious posting, and Frontinus seems to have done just that; he retired to Formiae in Italy and wrote – not only the collection of stratagems, but other (unfortunately) lost works. These campaigns are obscure and overshadowed by later campaigns, a situation not helped by the damnatio memoriae suffered by the tyrant Domitian, where all of his accomplishments were denigrated and dismissed. Frontinus, however, was not tarred with the same brush.

If Frontinus' career ended there, it would be remarkable – he had served under every emperor from Claudius onwards (seven emperors) and participated in almost every notable campaign of the age – from Britain to Parthia. What is more, he had done so without any interruption. Many other commanders came under suspicion and were put to death, or their careers sidelined, during the same period - commanders like Domitius Corbulo and Julius Agricola, who are both more famous than Frontinus. But Frontinus' career was not over. In A.D. 96, Domitian was assassinated and Frontinus seems to have supported or promoted both the emperor Nerva (96-98) and his successor, the emperor Trajan (98-117). Frontinus was not associated with the tyranny of Domitian, despite having been one of his most prominent commanders. Nerva appointed Frontinus curator of aqueducts, and shared a consulship with him. Trajan too shared a consulship with Frontinus – both holding their third 'ordinary consulship' in the same year. This was the highest honour a non-imperial family member could possibly achieve. He seems to have been consulted by Trajan in preparation for the emperor's Dacian campaigns, famously depicted on Trajan's Column, and literary evidence suggests that Frontinus was one of the most prominent and highly respected men of his day. This 'second career' lasted until A.D. 104 when we think Frontinus died – probably reaching his mid-70s.

His is one of the most remarkable, longest, and least known Imperial Roman military careers, but one many more people should be familiar with.

Frontinus is probably depicted behind the emperor in the Cancelleria Relief (now located in the Vatican)

Image: Wiki / PD / CC

CHARLES SHAY

WORDS: GAVIN MORTIMER

Of the many World War II veterans I've had the privilege to meet, few if any have been as remarkable as Charles Shay. A Native American of the Penobscot tribe, Charles was born in 1924, the year that Congress enacted the Indian Citizenship Act, granting all Native Americans born in the USA the right to vote. Some states complied with the Act, but others didn't, including Maine, where Charles lived with his parents and three brothers. They were raised in poverty on a reservation, and yet when the U.S. entered the war in 1941, Charles and his brothers all served their country, despite the fact that they were considered 'second class citizens'; allowed to die for their country, but not to vote.

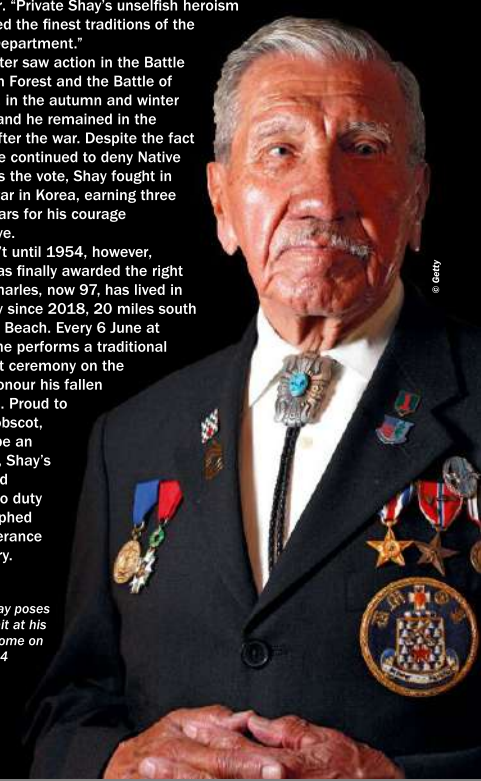
Charles trained as a medic, and on arriving in England in late 1943, he was posted to the 16th Infantry Regiment, 1st Infantry Division.

He was in the first wave at Omaha Beach on D-Day, coming ashore at 6.30am amid a maelstrom of fire. Hundreds of Americans were killed or wounded in those bloody few hours as they fought to establish a beachhead. Charles, just 19, moved calmly from casualty to casualty, doing what he could to alleviate their suffering. At one moment he saw that the tide was coming in, threatening to drown the wounded who lay helpless on the beach. Without hesitation he ran down the beach and began dragging them to safety while enemy machine gunners singled him out.

He lost count of how many he saved. A dozen, maybe more, carrying on until he collapsed from exhaustion. "Subordinating personal safety to the welfare of his comrades, Private Shay repeatedly plunged into the treacherous sea and carried critically injured men to safety," ran the citation of his Silver Star. "Private Shay's unselfish heroism exemplified the finest traditions of the Medical Department."

Shay later saw action in the Battle of Hurtgen Forest and the Battle of the Bulge, in the autumn and winter of 1944, and he remained in the military after the war. Despite the fact that Maine continued to deny Native Americans the vote, Shay fought in another war in Korea, earning three Bronze Stars for his courage and resolve.

It wasn't until 1954, however, that he was finally awarded the right to vote. Charles, now 97, has lived in Normandy since 2018, 20 miles south of Omaha Beach. Every 6 June at 6.30am, he performs a traditional Penobscot ceremony on the sand to honour his fallen comrades. Proud to be a Penobscot, proud to be an American, Shay's dignity and devotion to duty has triumphed over intolerance and bigotry.



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Charles Shay poses for a portrait at his Old Town home on 3 June 2014

GEORGE MARSHALL

WORDS: MARC DESANTIS

By late 1943, General George Marshall was one of the most prominent and respected soldiers in the world. As Chief of Staff of the U.S. Army during World War II, he was the linchpin of the American war effort, directing millions of servicemen in multiple theatres in the global struggle against the Axis Powers. He would have been a natural choice of Supreme Commander for the Allied forces that were slated to mount a cross-Channel invasion of France – Operation Overlord – in 1944.

In December 1943, the time for a decision concerning the filling of the paramount position for Overlord had arrived. It was going to be given to an American, so the choice fell to President Franklin Delano Roosevelt. On his way back from the Tehran Conference, where he had met recently with Winston Churchill and Joseph Stalin, Roosevelt stopped in Cairo, Egypt. He called Marshall to talk with him on 5 December.

Roosevelt was deeply ambivalent about the choice before him. He knew that Marshall wanted the job, of course. But what would the president do without Marshall at his side overseeing the war? He relied very heavily on Marshall's political acumen, in addition to his sage military counsel. Marshall could not be replaced readily, if at all, with an equally capable officer.

Roosevelt didn't want to flatly deny the position to Marshall, either. He therefore left it up to the general himself to request it directly. Therefore, Roosevelt asked Marshall what he wanted to do concerning the Overlord post.

Marshall surely wanted the command. He had expected it to be offered to him, yet he would not make the decision for the president. That had to be left up to Roosevelt, and Marshall did not want to sway him.

Marshall refused to express a preference. He told the president "to act in whatever way he felt was to the best interest of the country," and not consider his feelings. For the general, the good of the nation had to come before the desires of an individual, even when that individual was him.

Roosevelt then said, much relieved, "Well, I didn't feel that I could sleep at ease if you were out of Washington." For the president, Marshall was simply indispensable, and he would remain the Army's Chief of Staff.

The Overlord command would go instead to General Dwight D. Eisenhower, another American officer who would himself win immortal fame as the leader of the grand enterprise against Hitler's Fortress Europe. Earlier, while staying in Tunisia, as part of the same trip to Tehran, and before Marshall had declined to make his own preference known in the Cairo meeting, Roosevelt had actually brought up the matter with Eisenhower.

"Ike, you and I know who was Chief of Staff during the last years of the [American] Civil War," said the president to Eisenhower, "but practically no one else knows, although the names of the field generals – Grant, of course, and Lee, and Jackson, Sherman, Sheridan, and others - every schoolboy knows them. I hate to think that fifty years from now practically nobody will know who George Marshall was. That is one of the reasons why I want George to have the big command - he is entitled to his place in history as a great general."

Roosevelt did not want Marshall to fade into obscurity, and would show real concern for Marshall's wishes. Marshall, however, when given the opportunity, would selflessly refuse to make his own desires known, for the good of his country.

"FOR THE GENERAL, THE GOOD OF THE NATION HAD TO COME BEFORE THE DESIRES OF AN INDIVIDUAL, EVEN WHEN THAT INDIVIDUAL WAS HIM"

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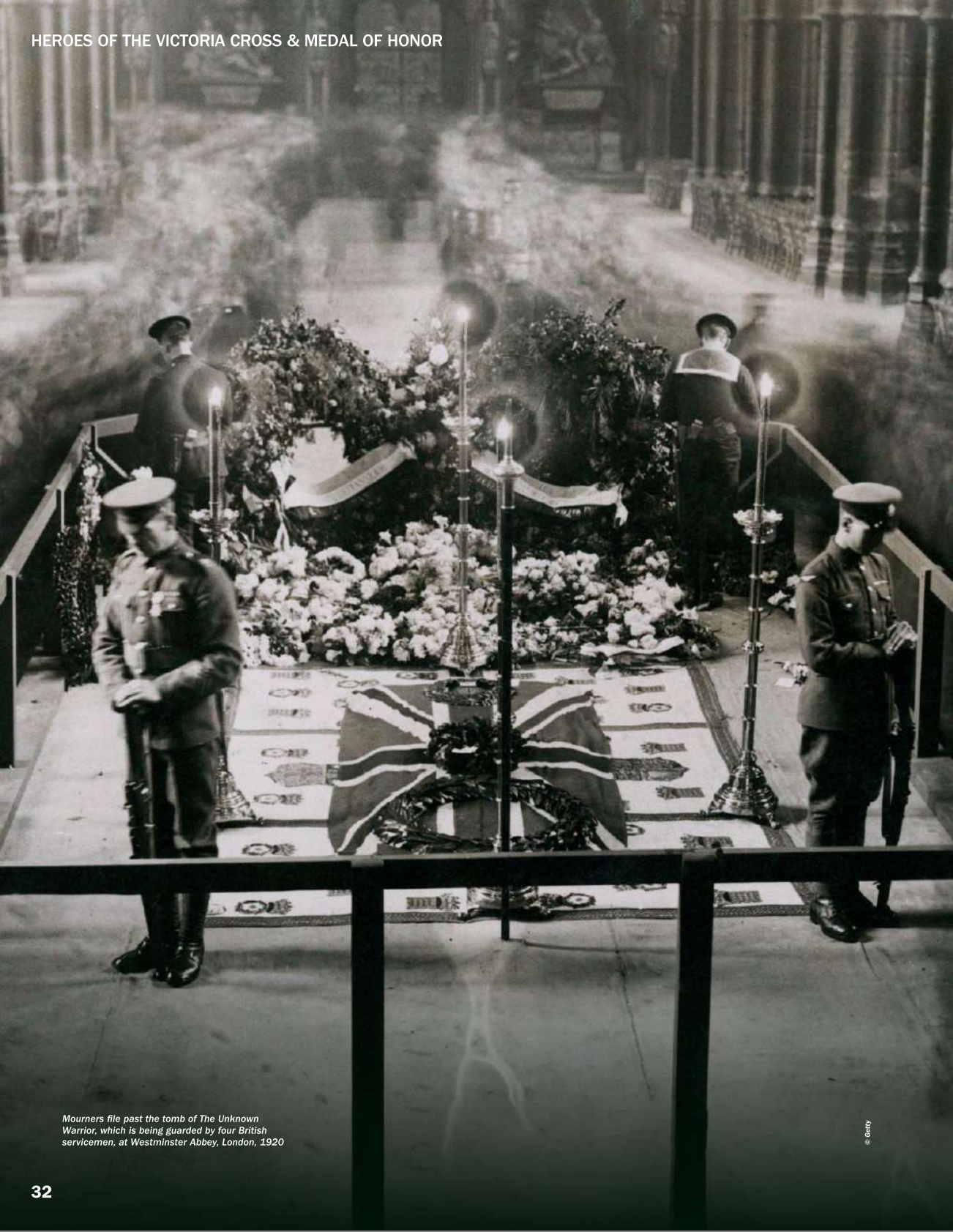


Mourners file past the tomb of The Unknown Warrior, which is being guarded by four British servicemen, at Westminster Abbey, London, 1920

© Getty

Heroes of the Victoria Cross & Medal of Honor

THE UNKNOWN

Many soldiers remain unidentified after falling in combat, so a novel concept emerged after the First World War – the burying of a single man to represent all unknown servicemen

WORDS **DAVID SMITH**

On 11 November 1920, the second anniversary of the armistice that ended the violence of the First World War, Britain and France both buried the remains of unknown soldiers, recognising the huge sacrifice made by the men who had fought in the war as well as acknowledging the tragic fact that so many could never hope to be identified.

Fallen soldiers have traditionally had to be satisfied with a hastily dug grave, often shared with comrades and usually close to the place where they died. Bringing bodies home was a luxury available to a select few, and with advances in weapons technology came new problems – it was often simply impossible to identify a soldier killed in action. It is a sad fact, therefore, that the majority of soldiers who died in service throughout history are now lying in anonymous graves.

This was considered, if not desirable, than at least understandable and acceptable until the 19th century. The United States led the way as attitudes began to change, with a burial ground set up in Mexico City for the US soldiers who had died there during the Mexican War. Burial grounds sprang up around the forts that dotted the American frontier, and a national cemetery system was set up in 1862 to cope with the massive losses sustained during the Civil War. The most famous, Arlington National Cemetery in Virginia, was established in 1864.

Two years later, 2,111 unidentified soldiers, mostly from the Battle of Bull Run, were buried together in the Tomb of the Civil War Unknowns at Arlington. To start with, the cemeteries were reserved for Union troops and it was not until 1912 that Confederate servicemen were officially accepted into the cemetery, but there are almost certainly Confederate remains among the 2,111 in the tomb at Arlington.

This did not, however, do much to comfort the tens of thousands of families who knew where their sons, brothers and fathers had fallen, but had no idea where they were buried. During the Civil War, it is estimated that around half the dead were never properly identified.

The situation became even worse during the First World War. The industrialised nature of the combat and the fact that static battlefields were churned up again and again by the heavy artillery of both sides, meant that thousands of men could never hope to be recovered, identified, repatriated and buried in individual graves.

The idea of a symbolic interment of a single unknown soldier appears to have started in France, where calls for such a gesture started as early as the Franco-Prussian War of 1870–71. Other versions of the story suggest it was the Reverend David Railton who hit on the idea after finding a grave in France marked ‘An Unknown British Soldier’. Whoever came up with the idea initially, after the end of the First World War it was revived, and Britain and France decided to each bury a single soldier as representatives of their voluminous number of unidentified dead.

“BENEATH THIS STONE RESTS THE BODY OF A BRITISH WARRIOR UNKNOWN BY NAME OR RANK, BROUGHT FROM FRANCE TO LIE AMONG THE MOST ILLUSTRIOUS OF THE LAND”

Engraving on the Tomb of the Unknown Warrior, Westminster Abbey

In France, six candidates were chosen, with the final decision being made by an infantryman. In Britain, there were four bodies, taken from the familiar battlefields of the war. While the bodies lay in a chapel in France on 7 November, each draped in a Union flag, Brigadier General L. J. Wyatt selected (apparently blindfolded) one of the men to be interred. The selected serviceman was returned to Britain aboard HMS Verdun and buried in Westminster Abbey on 11 November as 'the Unknown Warrior', the word 'warrior' being chosen to include all branches of the armed forces and not just the Army. His grave includes French soil, a slab of black Belgian marble lies above him, and a 16th century Crusader sword lies by his side inside the coffin.

The burial ceremonies drew huge crowds in both Britain and France and stimulated other nations to follow suit soon after – America, Italy, Belgium and Portugal in 1921, Czechoslovakia and Romania in 1922, and so on until most nations had a similar monument. Self-governing British dominions were initially satisfied to be represented by the warrior at Westminster Abbey (Australia was happy with this arrangement as late as 1994, when an unknown soldier was buried at the Australian War Memorial at Canberra).

> **"THE AMERICAN UNKNOWN SOLDIER IS EVERYMAN OF THE MYSTERY PLAYS. HE IS THE PERFECT SYMBOL OF EQUALITARIANISM"**
>
> **W. Lloyd Warner**

Germany and Russia, two nations who had suffered perhaps more than any other during the war, were notable by their abstention. The war was not something the Bolshevik revolutionaries wished to commemorate in any way, and it would not be until 1930 that Germany represented its unknown fallen in such a memorial.

In the United States, around 100,000 members of the public walked solemnly past the coffin of their Unknown Soldier (who had been returned from Europe aboard the USS Olympia) as it lay in state at the Capitol Building on the day before it was interred.

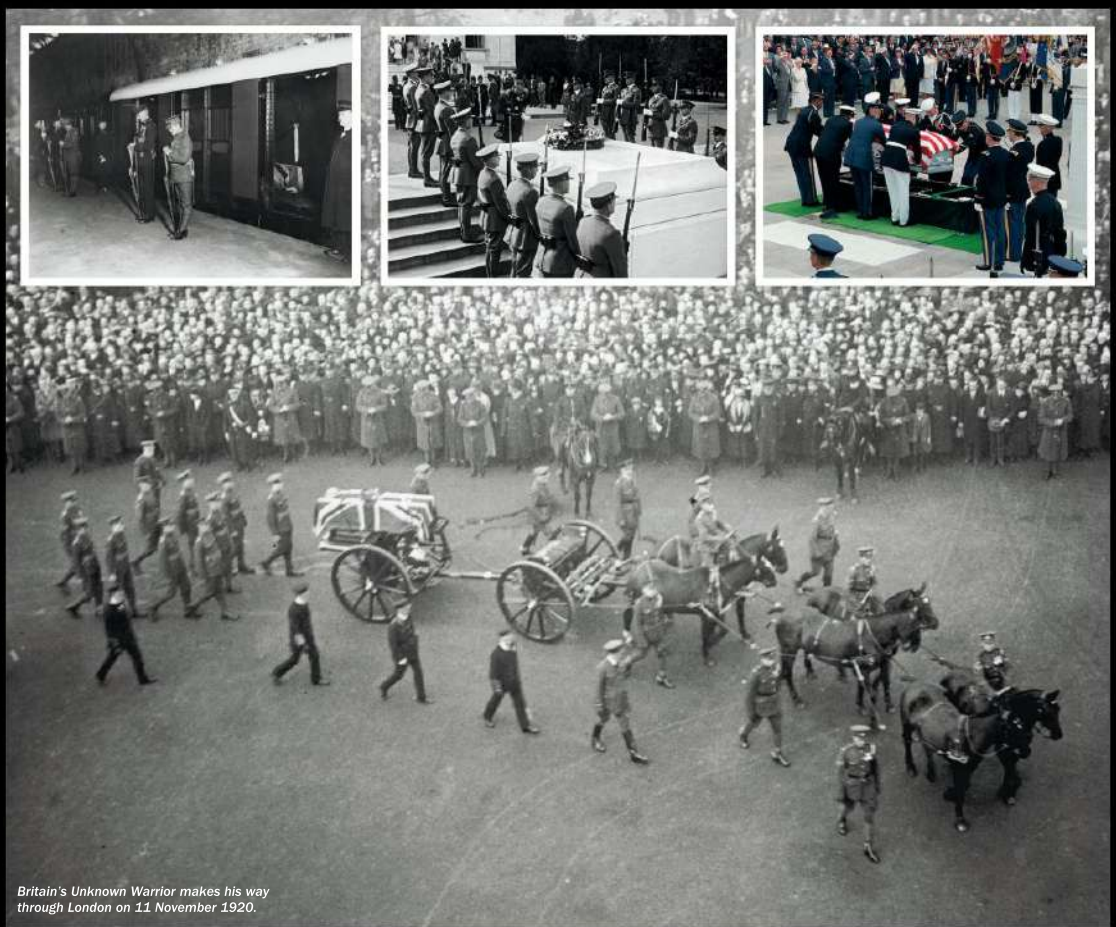
The idea that dead soldiers deserved memorialising as fallen citizens who had sacrificed everything for their homeland was a relatively new concept. War monuments had traditionally glorified the victorious generals or kings who had led their men, rather than the men themselves.

Almost as soon as these symbolic warriors were interred, however, a rush began to recognise their sacrifice in even more unequivocal terms – not only were the men recognised for their service and sacrifice, they were to be elevated to the status of heroes.

Inset below, left: *Soldiers guard the coffin of the Unknown Warrior, 11 November 1920*

Inset below, middle: *Vice Admiral Kichisaburo Nomura pays his respects at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier*

Inset below, right: *The Unknown Soldier from the Vietnam War joins his comrades at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier at Arlington*



Britain's Unknown Warrior makes his way through London on 11 November 1920.

On Armistice Day, pallbearers carry the coffin of the Unknown Soldier of World War I down the steps of the Capitol in Washington DC

A wounded First World War veteran gazes at the resting place of the Soldat inconnu in Paris.

All images © Getty

Obviously, nobody knew exactly what the men buried in the various memorials had done during the war, but whether they had died storming enemy trenches or huddled in misery in their own was beside the point. As symbols of the sacrifice of the nations involved in the war, they were inevitably also symbols of the bravery of the men who had fought around the world.

In 1921, in his last act as President of the United States, Woodrow Wilson awarded the Medal of Honor, America's highest award for gallantry, to the unknown soldiers buried in London and Paris. The French quickly conferred the Légion d'honneur on America's unknown soldier and Britain (somewhat belatedly) bestowed the Victoria Cross on the nameless man buried in Arlington Cemetery. This sparked a round of medal-giving that continued until 1929, when Portugal and Belgium bestowed their most prestigious medals on each other's unknown soldiers.

This was not without controversy, with some claiming that the medals effectively appropriated the men into the narrative of heroic sacrifice whether they had believed in such notions or not. Those who believed the war had been pointless often spoke on behalf of the unknown soldiers. The American poet Edgar Lee Masters, in 1924, wrote, "… had we known what was back of their words, we should not be lying here!"

The dissent has been taken further by various groups – pacifists in Bremen erecting a tomb for the Unknown Deserter in 1987. The soldiers were also powerless to resist being adopted by the emerging right-wing parties of the inter-war period. Mussolini and Hitler both made use of the imagery of the noble dead. And Hitler even claimed, rather ludicrously, that he was Germany's unknown soldier.

Britain has limited itself to the single interment, with the warrior now representing the unidentified dead of all conflicts, before, including and after the First World War. Other nations have gone further. France has created a monument to house ashes from a Nazi concentration camp, while America has repatriated unidentified bodies from the Second World War, Korea and Vietnam. Japan, Russia and Vietnam have installed their own monuments, and Iraq was the first to inter an unknown soldier while the war in which he fell was still ongoing, in a monument described as looking "like a flying saucer made from reinforced concrete and frozen in midflight".

Various traditions have grown up around the memorials. In Moscow, it was traditional for newly married couples to have their first wedding photograph taken by the tomb erected in 1967. Brides would leave their wedding bouquets on the monument commemorating the men who had died to save Moscow during the Great Patriotic War.

Interpretations and criticisms vary, but for the most part the memorials have been accepted in the spirit in which they were created – as a means of giving at least some comfort to the families who lost loved ones and had no hope of ever kneeling beside an individual grave.

For many, it was possible to imagine it might actually be their lost family member buried in Westminster Abbey, or at Arlington, or underneath the Arc de Triomphe. It is difficult to find anything morally questionable about that.

BEHIND ENEMY LINES 1944-45

INTERVIEW WITH 1 SAS VETERAN ALEC BORRIE

WORDS TOM GARNER

British soldiers in a defensive position after capturing Wesel, 23 March 1945

© Alamy

Spearheading the invasion of occupied France in 1944 were a small number of Special Forces soldiers, dropped deep into enemy territory to disrupt enemy activity. Among them was a young Londoner, fresh from training – here he reveals how he survived dangerous guerrilla warfare in France and beyond, as part of the fledgling Special Air Service

Alec Borrie pictured aged 20 in Brussels, 1944

Image: Alec Borrie

© Alamy

In 1944, the Western Allied invasion of Europe required more than the hundreds of thousands of soldiers who stormed the beaches of Normandy. To keep as many German troops away from the invasion zone, specially trained commandos were needed to cause maximum disruption behind enemy lines. Among these formidable soldiers were the men of Britain's now famous Special Air Service.

Between June and September 1944, the 1st SAS Regiment carried out guerrilla operations against German forces while working alongside French Resistance fighters. Under direct orders from Winston Churchill, 1st SAS ambushed enemy convoys and conducted various acts of sabotage. However, these operations came at a heavy price, with captured commandos receiving no quarter from the Nazis.

Fighting among the SAS was a young Londoner: Trooper Alec Borrie. Now one of just two surviving WWII veterans of 1st SAS Regiment, Borrie was barely out of his teens when he was deployed to France. Now aged 97, he reveals how he survived ambushes, advanced through Western Europe into Germany and fought alongside 1st SAS's famous commander – Paddy Mayne.

Scottish training

Born in Soho Square, London in 1924, Borrie was working for Vickers engineering firm when he volunteered for the British Army in 1942, "I was making bomb boxes and did exactly the same thing every day. I got very fed up but couldn't leave to go somewhere else so the only alternative was to volunteer for the armed forces."

Borrie initially joined the Gordon Highlanders but was transferred to the Highland Light Infantry and posted to northern Scotland. While he was stationed in the Orkney Islands, he volunteered for the Special Air Service almost by accident, "I joined the SAS in January 1944 because I wanted to get off the Orkney Islands! I know it sounds strange but it was the middle of winter and it was absolutely like the Arctic. It was terrible so when I heard that volunteers were wanted for the SAS three of us volunteered, although we didn't know what it was. As it happened all three of us survived the war."

Alec Borrie is the "very proud" recipient of the Légion d'honneur from the French government for his service in France during 1944

As part of the recruitment process, Borrie was interviewed by Lieutenant Colonel Robert Blair 'Paddy' Mayne, a founding member of the SAS, "I was interviewed by Paddy Mayne for about ten minutes. I can't remember much but I do know that he asked me how I felt about killing people. I said, 'I haven't done it but I think it'll be OK'. He obviously accepted that."

Now inducted into the SAS, Borrie underwent a period of intense training, "We tramped for miles all over the Scottish moors and did parachute jumps. You would be dropped somewhere and have to find your way back to the barracks. Two of us would sometimes be dropped off by truck and it would be a 45-mile journey. You'd have to be back the following morning but it was impossible to walk the entire distance so you would do something like steal a bike or whatever. Then the next day a priest would come up, collect everything and take it back!"

Despite these harsh endurance tests, Borrie took it all in his stride, "It was fine because we were all extremely fit anyway. The training wasn't hard, at least not for me. Before D-Day we went down to RAF Fairford, Gloucestershire, where we were shut in and couldn't go anywhere. However, we did night-time driving practice where we would go a mile down the road to a lovely pub and we'd drive back again. That was our practice!"

"Commando Order"

The SAS's purpose for the upcoming invasion of France was deadly serious. Tasked with performing guerrilla operations many miles behind enemy lines, the SAS's aim was to disrupt and slow down the advance of German reinforcements towards Normandy. This would allow the Allies to consolidate their gains and bridgeheads in the region during the days and weeks following 6 June 1944.

These plans for the SAS were already highly dangerous but the situation was made even more hazardous by the existence of the infamous Kommandobefehl (Commando Order). Issued by the Nazi high command since October 1942, the order stated that all Allied commandos in Europe and Africa could be killed immediately upon capture without trial. A direct breach of the international laws of war, the order treated commandos like spies rather than soldiers and they could be executed even if they were wearing uniforms.

The Commando Order was a chilling directive but, despite knowing of its existence, Borrie and his comrades remained unconcerned, "We definitely knew about the order before we left for France but I don't think anybody took any notice because you could get killed if you went into action as an ordinary soldier. Although there might have been a little extra chance the odds weren't that different."

Under these circumstances, the SAS deployed black humour, particularly after Borrie's unit was paid a less than inspirational

visit by Field Marshal Bernard Montgomery, "He came round before we left and I remember him saying, 'If you do your job we will probably not see you again.' He was about 50 percent right but I think we had a bit of a laugh about what he said. To be honest I don't think most SAS men are normal. We like to think we're normal but I'm sure we're not!"

"Cause a nuisance"

Now a fully-trained trooper and Jeep driver in C Squadron, 1st SAS Regiment, Borrie waited as SAS units were gradually deployed to France. "We were told just before D-Day that six lads were going to go into Normandy. They would be dropped a little way in and shoot up a lot of German weapons. But then, gradually, people kept disappearing into action and when your turn came you went. They had decided to drop Jeeps by parachute but a lot of them were not serviceable afterwards so they decided to fly us over in transporters with Jeeps. We'd drive through the German lines and on up to a place where the SAS had a base. We'd have a couple or three days there before we went off [on operations]."

Aged only 19 when he joined the SAS, Borrie was known as 'Boy' by the time he finally departed for France by air, "We went by aircraft and the Jeeps were taken in transporters. It's a strange thing, I can remember getting on the plane with the parachute and everything but I can't remember whether the plane landed or we jumped out. I rather fancy that we landed because the Jeeps were already on the ground. Our officer later wrote a book and he said, 'The one thing I can't remember is whether you jumped out or landed,' so that was two of us who had trouble remembering!"

1st SAS's task was to operate approximately 120-130 miles behind enemy lines in the area between Lyon and Dijon. Under direct orders from Winston Churchill to "cause a nuisance" they aimed to inflict mayhem on the Germans with Borrie distinctly remembering his first action, "We didn't see any of our own British people for a couple of months and we started shooting up anything we could manage. A couple of weeks after we arrived we shot up a German convoy. We thought it was just three trucks but it turned out to be a big armoured convoy that they joined around a bend. We had to bail out quickly and lost one Jeep. One man was shot through the hand so it was a bit of a disaster."

Moving at speed across the French countryside in a small convoy of vehicles, the men of 1st SAS were well-equipped but often had to live off the land, "I drove a Jeep and there was eight of us in a section. There were four Jeeps with two men to a vehicle and each Jeep had five guns, including a Vickers K machine-gun. We had all the ammunition we wanted, including explosives. We would wear bits and pieces but mainly wore grey flannel shirts with army trousers because we went in uniform. There was the maroon beret of course but we dressed comfortably as we wanted. Food was also important and we never actually went short of anything. If you were a bit hard up you'd nick a chicken off a farmer or something similar."

As well as fighting the Germans, Borrie also worked closely with the French Resistance as the weeks progressed. "Although we initially shot things up our role was then changed a bit to supply and train the local Resistance. By then we were running out of targets because the Germans were all retreating back into Germany. We were in the middle between the Allied forces coming up through Italy and Normandy. We were either encountering German forces that were too big for us to handle or there was nothing to do.

"We were told afterwards that a lot of the Resistance [we encountered] were actually criminals. They liked to get hold of stuff and the Germans were the only ones that had it so they fought against them. We would supply them and they were good fighters. Relations between us and the Resistance were good and my [operational] partner was French. He was supposed to be an interpreter but he didn't speak much English and I didn't speak much French! However, we did get on and we stayed friends until he died a couple of years ago."

Image: Wiki / PD / Gov

The SAS (including Alec Borrie) extensively used armed Jeeps for their light, off-road capabilities which was ideal for rapid, mobile operations

Two SAS Jeeps pictured in France, 19 August 1944

Image: Wiki / PD / Gov

A British commando climbs a steep rock face during training at Glencoe, Scotland, November 1941

"TO BE HONEST I DON'T THINK MOST SAS MEN ARE NORMAL. WE LIKE TO THINK WE'RE NORMAL BUT I'M SURE WE'RE NOT!"

"A TRUE GENTLEMAN"

Lieutenant Colonel Robert Blair 'Paddy' Mayne was a tough but misunderstood Ulsterman whose exploits while commanding 1st SAS Regiment became the stuff of legend

An athletic sportsman from Newtownards, County Down in Northern Ireland, Mayne had represented Ireland and the British Lions at rugby during the late 1930s and was also a trained solicitor. Initially an artillery and infantry officer from 1939, Mayne became a commando and was Mentioned in Despatches for fighting in the Syria-Lebanon Campaign before he joined the newly created SAS in 1941.

During 1941-42, Mayne earned a formidable reputation in North Africa by commanding audacious raids against German airfields. He recorded a personal tally of over 100 enemy aircraft destroyed before he took over command of 1st SAS Regiment in January 1943 after SAS founder, David Stirling, was captured. Mayne led the unit through Sicily, Italy, France and Germany and won a plethora of medals. This included the Distinguished Service Order & Three Bars as well as the Légion d'honneur and Croix de Guerre from France.

One of the most highly decorated soldiers of WWII, Mayne had a mercurial personality. He was extremely courageous and intelligent but his behaviour away from the battlefield could often lead to violence. Nevertheless, Alec Borrie, who served and fought alongside him, believes his character has been unfairly maligned, "I knew he was an important figure but he was not what people say about him. He's been really maltreated since he died with people saying he was a bully and a drunkard but he wasn't. He was quietly spoken and never bullied or spoke harsh to anyone. He would call you by your Christian name and he was a true gentleman. But – he was a very, very hard man."

Despite the many dangerous missions he led, Mayne survived the war and returned to civilian life when the SAS was disbanded in October 1945. He continued his legal career in Northern Ireland but was plagued with a wartime back injury for the rest of his life. Mayne was killed in a car accident in December 1955 and a statue of him now stands in Newtownards.

In 2003, a temporary British Army base in Kuwait for 1st Battalion, Royal Irish Regiment was named 'Camp Blair Mayne' on the eve of the Iraq War

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Robert Blair Mayne's bronze statue stands in Conway Square, Newtownards while the western bypass of the town is also named after him

Because of the nature of their mission, operating so far from Allied forces, the SAS took extremely heavy casualties in France. This was largely due to the infamous Commando Order, "Our casualties were 50 percent, although not in our section. In France, there are over 300 graves of 1st and 2nd SAS Regiment men. Most of those who died in Germany were killed in action but in France they were mainly caught and executed. For example, during Operation Bulbasket (near Poitiers) about 30 SAS personnel were killed after being captured. The SAS of course went after those responsible after the war. Those who were captured were put on trial but they weren't sentenced to what they should have been sentenced to in my opinion."

River salutes

After two months in France, Borrie and his section recuperated in liberated Belgium before 1st SAS was posted north, "We had six weeks' rest (if you can call it rest) in Brussels and then we went on to the Netherlands where we patrolled along the bank of the River Maas. The river was then the only separation between the Allies and the Germans but there was nothing going on."

Compared to what he had experienced in France, Borrie found himself foraging for food and even fraternising with the enemy during patrols, "In between us and the river were farms with pigs running about. We were with the British Field Security Police and they said if we got a pig then we could have a nice dinner. We did that on a regular basis but there were other times in the mornings where we would wave to the Germans across the river and they would wave back!"

After this spell in the Low Counties, Borrie was granted a period of leave back in Britain. His time at home proved to be short-lived, "It was supposed to be for a month but we got a telegram within two weeks telling us to go back across the Rhine."

"A spot of bother"

When the Western Allied invasion of Germany began during February-March 1945, Borrie found himself performing a difficult task for Canadian forces, "We did reconnaissance for the Canadian Army, which wasn't a good job. We were supposed to be reconnoitring in front but we were not trained to do that. We'd go off and sometimes end up 20 miles in front during the day. We were getting trapped and it was Paddy Mayne who pulled us out in the end because it wasn't our job and the war was virtually over."

Borrie recalls that Mayne often came to the rescue of SAS units who came under heavy enemy attack, "He would mainly come if you were in a spot of bother. He'd turn up and you'd think, 'It's alright now because he's here and we'll be OK.'"

It was during one of these rescue missions that Borrie directly witnessed Mayne displaying such courage that he was recommended for the Victoria Cross. On 9 April 1945 near Oldenburg, Lower Saxony, members of the SAS (including Borrie) were pinned down in a ditch following an ambush. "The leading vehicle of about ten Jeeps went around a corner and came under fire. We stopped while Mayne came up and he got someone to drive him around the corner. He wiped out a pillbox and those who were doing the shooting so he managed to save the SAS people who were there. Two were dead, one was injured, another fellah had been shot through the leg and I was about 20 yards from Mayne when this happened."

As well as eliminating the German pillbox, Mayne had also killed enemy snipers who had been hiding in nearby farm buildings. One of his superior officers later speculated on why the colonel had not been killed himself, "The sheer audacity and daring which he showed in driving his Jeep across their field of fire momentarily bewildered the enemy."

Although he was recommended for the Victoria Cross, Mayne's award was downgraded to a third Bar on his Distinguished Service Order. Borrie believes that Mayne should have been awarded Britain's highest honour for his actions at Oldenburg, "He should have got the

Members of the SAS possibly pictured during Operation Wallace-Hardy, August 1944

British soldiers cook a meal during the advance between the Rivers Maas and Rhine

SAS members, including Major Roy Farran (seated, right) in France

Alec Borrie considered the pro-Nazi Vichy French 'Milice' paramilitaries to be the most brutal enemy fighters he encountered in Europe

A Milice member is pictured wearing a Germany Army Wound Badge and is armed with a Smith & Wesson revolver

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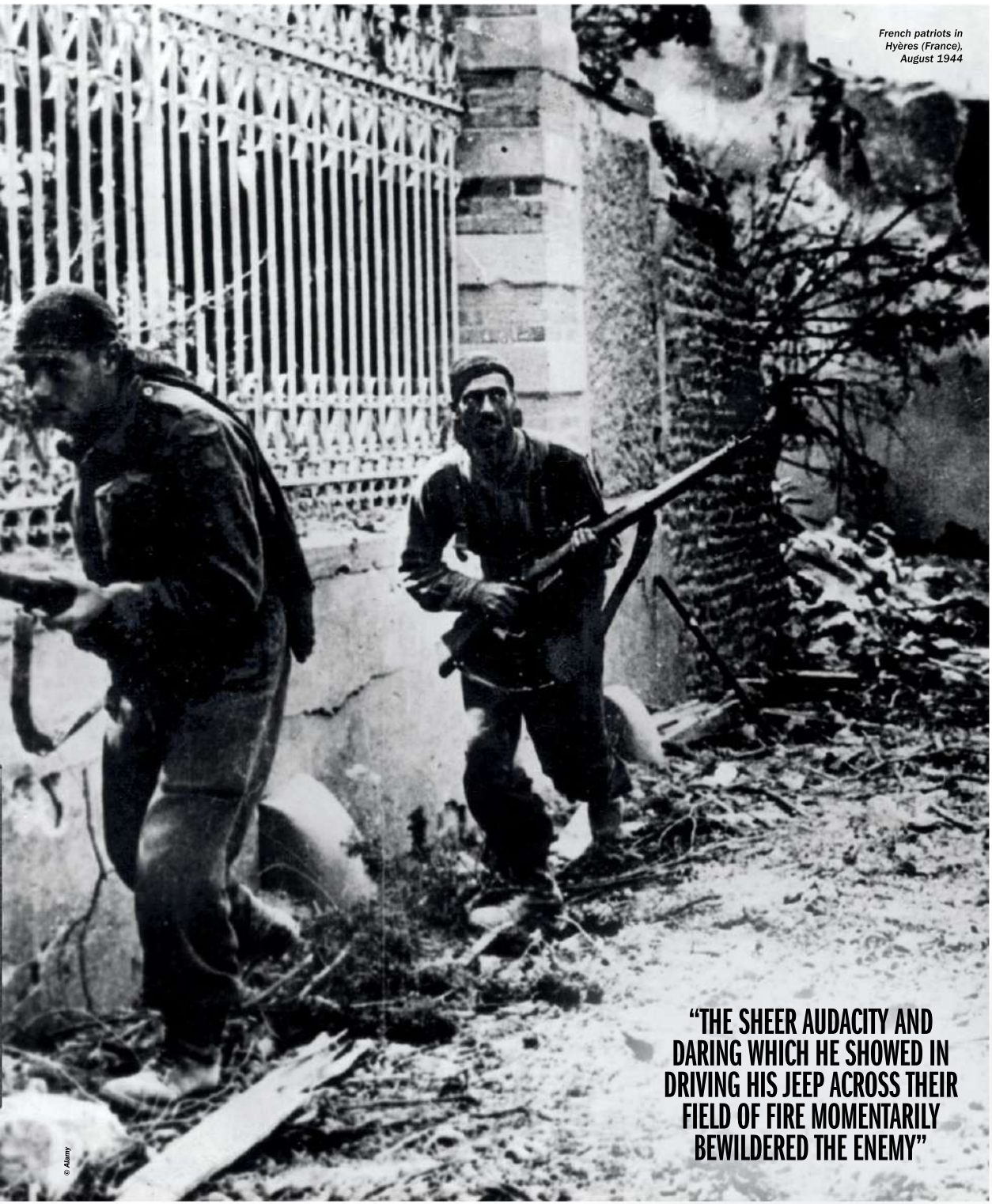

French patriots in Hyères (France), August 1944

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"THE SHEER AUDACITY AND DARING WHICH HE SHOWED IN DRIVING HIS JEEP ACROSS THEIR FIELD OF FIRE MOMENTARILY BEWILDERED THE ENEMY"

Alec Borrie pictured at Biggin Hill Memorial Museum, Kent in 2020

VC because he was one of the best people, particularly for that job."

1st SAS were frequently in danger as they advanced through Germany but Borrie also encountered many capitulating soldiers, including his enemy counterparts. "The war had almost finished by then and the Germans were surrendering to us rather than the Russians. We once had a load of surrendering German Special Forces men. We were short of food, however we found some and shared it out between us and them."

Despite the Commando Order, Borrie feels largely magnanimous towards his former enemies. "The Germans were similar people to us really and once the fighting was over there were no problems. The ordinary German Army in particular were much the same as us. They were fighting for their country and we were fighting for ours. There were the SS and the Gestapo but the worst of all were the [Vichy French] Milice. They were evil people who committed atrocities against their own people. I can't stomach that – they were worse than anybody else in my opinion."

***Above:** Brigadier Mike Calvert, Commandant of the SAS Brigade, pictured at a ceremony marking the passing of 3rd and 4th SAS Regiments from the British to the French Army at Tarbes, France, 2 October 1945*

Borrie's own war in Germany ended when his Jeep drove over a mine approximately three weeks before VE Day. "There were three of us on the Jeep and an ambulance came up and took us to a casualty station, although one of us had died by then. We were patched up and sent home to Manchester. We spent a couple of weeks there before we were transferred to Dartford, Kent. In theory it was right near home for me but I couldn't go because I was only allowed out for very short periods of time."

Far from being able to celebrate Victory in Europe, Borrie had to recover from his injuries before preparing to fight the Japanese. "We then went to the SAS in Chelmsford getting ready to go to the Far East. However, somebody came round one day and said, 'Forget it. It's all over.' I can't even remember going out and having a pint to celebrate [VJ Day]. I can't remember doing much at all."

Changing Perceptions

Borrie left the SAS in 1946 as a lance corporal and worked as a carpenter until he retired. In the decades since WWII, he has noticed that perceptions of the SAS have changed dramatically. "It's strange because people either think that you're some sort of superman or that you just kill people. The real problem was the 1980 Iranian Embassy siege because they televised it. Everyone then heard about the SAS but previous to that hardly anyone knew about them. You never talked about it except when you went to a reunion and saw your old mates. Even then, you'd perhaps talk about where you served but you never talked about what you actually did."

When it comes to the SAS's contribution to the Allies during WWII, Borrie believes that they were a formidable diversionary force. "Some people say that the SAS's contribution was quite a lot. Others think it was next to nothing, but what it did do was keep German troops away from the front. This was a big help from D-Day onwards and in the desert they destroyed more aircraft than the RAF. We were not liked by the top people in the army because they couldn't tell us what to do. Only Churchill could tell us what he wanted us to do because we were ultimately an independent unit in the army."

The SAS suffered horrendous casualties during WWII to divert German forces in Europe, with Borrie being lucky to survive. When he looks back on his wartime service, one incident in particular has remained with him. "The strange thing is when I was in Belgium a little girl gave me a coin. It was a two-and-a-half guilder piece – quite a big silver coin. I remember that she said, 'You keep it and so long as you have it you will be OK'. I was blown up two months later but I survived. I've also survived Asian flu and COVID-19. I'm not a superstitious person but I do give the coin a little tap every morning!"

THE TAXI CHARITY

Alec Borrie is a beneficiary of an award-winning charity that provides free transportation and events for military veterans

The Taxi Charity for Military Veterans aims to help military veterans of all conflicts by providing entertainment, outings and specialised equipment. They offer international trips to the Netherlands, Belgium and France, day trips to concerts, museums and catch-up events with friends and comrades. The veterans are transported by volunteer London taxi drivers who willingly provide their time and vehicles to provide free transportation.

To fund and facilitate these endeavours, the charity is wholly reliant on donations from members of the public, businesses and trusts. On 2 June 2021, the Taxi Charity was awarded the Queen's Award for Voluntary Service (QAVS), which is the MBE for volunteer groups and is awarded for life.

Alec Borrie is one veteran the charity has been able to help by assisting his own volunteer work speaking to schoolchildren about his wartime experiences, "They find me work to do! They started me off doing work with schoolchildren who were doing WWII projects. We've also had some nice dinners, although we haven't been able to do anything for almost two years now [because of the COVID-19 pandemic]. However, we went to the arboretum a few weeks back for a D-Day ceremony and they also provide me with a free tab to go to hospitals. They're a good organisation and are trying to start a few more things again."

Speaking about the recent QAVS award, Ian Parsons, Chairman of the Taxi Charity, has said, "This is a very proud moment for the Taxi Charity and the London black cab trade. The COVID pandemic has been a uniquely challenging period and I'm glad our response provided comfort to our veterans, especially those living alone and feeling isolated. I would like to thank all our volunteers who have worked so hard and whose efforts helped us win this prestigious award."

For more information visit: www.taxicharity.org

WWII veteran Frederick Glover stands in front of a taxi as part of a launch to drive 150 veterans back to the beaches of Normandy in 2017

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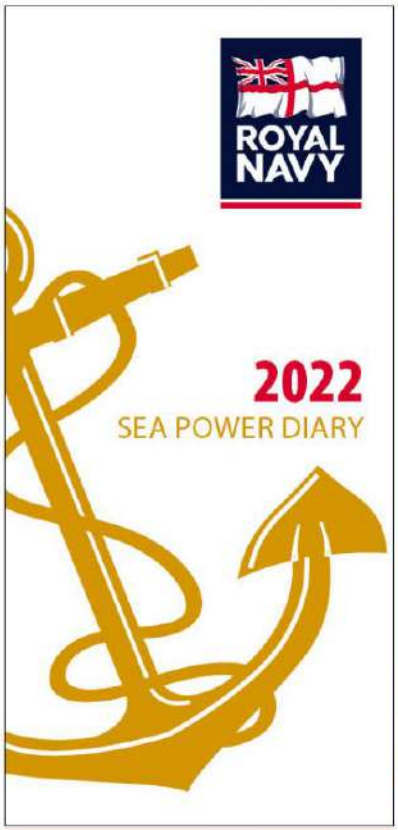

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THE KING THAT DEFIED THE KAISER

WORDS **NICK SOLDINGER**

As Europe inched towards the abyss of war, Belgium's monarch was offered a stark choice by Germany. His courageous actions changed history forever...

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Albert, pictured in his military uniform, was a favourite of his people

© Getty

Albert's wife, Queen Elisabeth of Belgium, who he married in 1923

KING ALBERT I OF BELGIUM

1875-1934

Resolutely defending Belgium throughout WWI after it was invaded by Germany, Albert led his troops bravely while continually searching for a peaceful solution to the war. He also helped to reform Belgium socially and politically throughout his reign.

German soldiers on the battlefield as photographed during the start of the war in 1914

© Alamy

On the morning of 2 August 1914, Claus von Below-Saleske, the German Ambassador in Brussels, delivered the following ultimatum to the Belgian government…

VERY CONFIDENTIAL

Reliable information has been received by the German Government that French forces intend to march through Belgian territory against Germany.

It is essential for the self-defence of Germany that she should anticipate any such hostile attack and Germany [therefore must], for her own protection, enter Belgian territory.

This is no act of hostility against Belgium. In the event of Belgium being prepared in the coming war to maintain an attitude of friendly neutrality towards Germany, the German Government bind themselves to evacuating Belgian territory on the conclusion of peace.

Should Belgium oppose German troops, [however], Germany will be compelled to consider Belgium as an enemy.

Just a month before it was issued, the heir to the Austro-Hungarian throne, Arch-Duke Franz Ferdinand, had been murdered. A pan-continental conflict was now brewing between Britain, France and Russia on one side and Germany and the Austro-Hungarian Empire on the other. Belgium, whose neutrality and independence was enshrined in international treaties recognised by both sides, and under the guidance of its king, Albert I, had done whatever it could to stay out of it. With war now seemingly inevitable, however, Belgium found itself very much in the way. Germany had already marched into Luxembourg to get its forces within striking distance of France, and – in the giant game of Risk that Germany's Kaiser Wilhelm II was now playing – Belgium looked like it would be next on his list.

The Kaiser must have figured he was onto a sure thing. By 1914, he'd built an army of around 1.3 million men, and had made no secret of his imperial ambitions. He wanted an empire that matched the might and influence of Britain's, and he'd do anything to get it. And if Albert and his Belgian subjects wouldn't be intimidated into submission, then he'd have to smash them into it. Besides, what serious opposition could this tiny country mount? It had an army of just 237,000 that was, compared to the Germans, locked in the past.

It was true. For years Albert had tried to strengthen Belgium's army. He was no warmonger – he was a deeply moral leader who'd done much to improve the lot of his subjects – but he was no fool either. The world was heading towards hell and he'd known it for some time, long pleading with his country's politicians to create a fighting force that could protect its borders.

His requests, however, fell mostly on deaf ears. In 1912, his generals told him that, at the current rate of modernisation, the earliest they could get Belgium's army ready for a major conflict would be 1918. War, however, was not going to wait that long. It was now on the Belgians' doorstep with a battering ram and Albert had two clear choices – either cave in or fight.

"Belgium is a nation, not a road," he told his advisors in response to the kaiser's demands. He then addressed the Belgian Parliament, explaining the situation as he saw it, "If the foreigner in defiance of our neutrality, whose demands we have always scrupulously observed, violates our territory, he will find all the Belgians gathered about their sovereign, who will never betray his constitutional oath… I have faith in our destinies; a country which is defending itself conquers the respect of all; such a country does not perish! It is the moment for action. No one

in this country will fail in his duty!" On 3 August, Albert rejected the German ultimatum. The following day the kaiser declared war on France and German troops began swarming across the border into Belgium. World War I had begun.

Albert was not born to be king. He was the second son of five siblings in his own family, while his own father was the third son of the first Belgian monarch, King Leopold I. However, tragedy and untimely deaths in the family ensured that by 1891 he was heir to Belgian throne. He was just 16 years old, but he took on the responsibility with admirable maturity. Knowing that he would one day be king, he set about preparing himself for the task not least because the reputation of the Belgian monarchy at the time was so tarnished. In an attempt at imperialising, Albert's predecessor Leopold II had established the Congo Free State in central Africa and between 1885 and 1908 had literally drained the life out of it for personal gain. He siphoned off a huge fortune in natural resources while his forces killed as many as ten million people in a string of atrocities that caused international outrage. When Albert eventually ascended to the throne in 1909 he was determined to be different.

Whereas Leopold II wanted his reign to be remembered for grandeur, Albert was keen to be seen as moderate, hard working and sympathetic to the needs of his subjects. As

"GERMAN TROOPS BEGAN SWARMING ACROSS THE BORDER INTO BELGIUM. WORLD WAR I HAD BEGUN"

well as setting a perfect example as a husband and a father, he also set about familiarising himself with every section of Belgian society. He was a deeply religious man yet one with very progressive ideas.

He began studying the problems of his country's poor and to search for solutions that might alleviate their working and living conditions. He also travelled to the Congo to see first-hand the devastation his predecessor had wreaked, presenting a detailed report on his return home on how the lives of his Congolese subjects could be improved and their ravished country repaired. Albert's commitment to duty and deep sense of right and wrong would find its most powerful expression, however, in the wake of the German invasion in 1914.

Belgium was bound to neutrality by an international treaty and had been since its inception in 1831. If Albert had allowed the Kaiser to use his country as a stepping-stone on his way to invading France, Belgium would have found itself a de facto ally of Germany. The easier route, of course, would have been to comply with the Kaiser's wishes, but Albert was a man of profound principle. Belgium's enforced neutrality was enshrined in law; a law which, as the country's constitutional monarch, he was not prepared to break. With his hand forced, Albert took the extraordinary step of standing up to the kaiser, even though doing so could cost him his kingdom. Unlike his German counterpart – who'd disappear behind his palace walls in Berlin once the killing began – Albert took personal responsibility for his decision to resist, promising to stand shoulder-to-shoulder with his people. As soon as hostilities started he assumed command of the Belgian army, and despite the overwhelming odds, began to lead a heroic defence of his country.

The German invasion of Belgium on 4 August 1914, was to have far-reaching consequences. The violation of Belgian neutrality was the excuse Britain had been looking for to join the fight against Germany. And Albert soon found his image being used to whip up support for the war as the UK press called for an army to be raised to help defend plucky little Belgium and their noble solider-king, as his own people adoringly called him. Before the first British troops had set foot on the continent, however, the bloodbath was in full swing.

ARTICLE II.

His Majesty the Queen of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland, His Majesty the Emperor of Austria, King of Hungary and Bohemia, His Majesty the King of the French, His Majesty the King of Prussia, and His Majesty the Emperor of all the Russias, declare, that the Articles mentioned in the preceding Article, are considered as having the same force and validity as if they were textually inserted in the present Act, and that they are thus placed under the guarantee of their said Majesties.

ARTICLE VII.

Belgium, within the limits specified in Articles I., II., and IV., shall form an independent and perpetually neutral State. It shall be bound to observe such neutrality towards all other States.

The 1839 Treaty of London, signed by representatives from Britain, Belgium, Austria, France, Russia and Prussia

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Like her husband, Elisabeth also visited the troops on the Front

A train fallen from a bridge destroyed in the Battle of the Marne. The battle was considered a great victory for the Allies

© Alamy

The Germans had forecasted that they'd overrun all of Belgium in a matter of days, but Albert had rallied his troops, calling upon them to hold up the German advance for as long as possible. Their response was as costly as it was courageous. On 5 August, advancing German troops encountered their first major obstacle – 12 massive forts that formed a defensive ring around the city of Liège, home to around 40,000 Belgian troops. For the next 12 days this numerically inferior force held out, inflicting considerable casualties on the invaders despite heavy bombardment from German artillery, and the city itself being subject to the world's first-ever aerial bombing when it was attacked by a Zeppelin airship.

While this heavy force of around 100,000 were being held up at Liège, the Kaiser's cavalry units raced ahead into northern and central Belgium. Here they met more Belgian resistance at the small town of Halen, where they'd hoped to secure a bridge over the River Gete. When Belgian engineers only partially destroyed the bridge with dynamite, Belgian troops – again outnumbered – took on the better-equipped Germans and managed to force them back.

The kaiser's superior invasion force was rapidly racking up casualties at a worrying rate against an enemy that, on paper, should have been a pushover. So when Liège eventually fell on 17 August, the kaiser once again appealed to Albert, imploring him to reconsider his position, to accept his original proposal and to spare Belgium what he called "the continuation of the of the horrors of war". Albert's response was typically stoic. "What does he take me for?" he reportedly sighed.

Infuriated by continued Belgian resistance, German soldiers now began committing atrocities against the civilian population including mass shootings, rapes and the torching of entire villages. By the end of August, 5,521 Belgian civilians had been murdered, while the Belgian army had suffered around 30,000 casualties. They had, however, crucially held the Germans up long enough for the French and British to get organised. On 6 September, their forces took on the Germans in what became known as the First Battle of the Marne. This encounter, which lasted a week, effectively halted the German advance into France and marked the start of four years of trench warfare on the Western Front.

By now, the Belgian government – which had abandoned Brussels before it had fallen into German hands on 20 August – had decamped to Le Havre in northern France. Albert, meanwhile, stayed with his troops setting up his headquarters in De Panne on the Belgian coast. German forces now swallowed up all but a small sliver of his kingdom in the far west.

Albert visiting troops in the trenches on the Yser

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Albert's oldest son, Leopold, seen here in the uniform of a Belgian army private in 1914

A FAMILY AFFAIR

How Albert's wife and son also helped to defend Belgium

When German forces overran Belgium at the start of World War I they conquered the entire country save for a strip of land in the country's south west known as Flanders. It was to become a cauldron of slaughter, as shellfire and poison gas were poured into it by both the Germans and the Allies on an unprecedented scale. It was here that Albert would spend most of the war, frequently visiting his troops on the front line, experiencing many of the same dangers that they were subjected to.

But Albert wasn't the only member of his family who'd do his bit during the Great War. His wife, Elisabeth – despite being German herself – would also make morale-boosting visits to the Front, handing out cigarettes and chocolates. Her biggest contribution, however, was in helping the wounded. She established a major military hospital in the former Grand Hôtel de l'Ocean in La Panne on the Belgian coast, where she and Albert were based. She actively funded the hospital and frequently visited wounded Belgian soldiers there. She also helped organise a fleet of military ambulances to ferry the wounded between the Front and field hospitals. Hugely popular with the Belgian people, by the end of the war she was known as Queen Nurse.

However, as Belgium was plunged into the worst crisis in its 83-year history, it was the contribution made by Albert's eldest son Prince Leopold, which was perhaps the most remarkable. Although only 14 at the time of the German invasion, he enlisted in the Belgian army as a private against the wishes of both his parents. He then served at the Front throughout the early dark days of the war. It was only in 1915, after months of combat, he was finally persuaded that – as Belgium's future king – he needed to finish his education, and went to England to continue his studies. The regiment he served with the 12th Regiment of the Line is the oldest in the Belgian army. It is known to this day as the Prince Leopold Regiment in his honour.

A MYSTERIOUS DEATH

Accident or murder? The curious case of Albert's untimely demise

On the morning of 17 February 1934, Albert was driven to Marches-les-Darmes in Ardennes by his valet. The king wanted to tackle a cliff there in preparation for a climbing expedition in the Alps he had planned for later that year. The car was stopped and the valet told to wait as the king set off in the direction of the cliff face. It was the last time anyone would see him alive.

The valet waited all day for the king to return, but when it started to get dark and there was still no sign of him, he called on a nearby aristocrat Baron Edmond Carton de Wiart for assistance, and a search was mounted by local police.

At around 2.00am, one of the searchers got his foot caught in a rope. Flashlights frantically scoured the darkness and the king's body was found. The other end of the rope still about his waist, and he was bent double at the foot of "a great pinnacle in a little crevasse". There was a massive gash down the left side of his head. He'd apparently fallen 20 metres down a cliff face.

His body was driven to a royal château about 80 kilometres away, before being transferred to Brussels where he was later buried. No autopsy was performed and no official cause of death was entered on his death certificate.

Over a million people are said to have attended his funeral, but even before it was over wild rumours began circulating that the king had been murdered. Some claimed he was pushed off the top of the cliff by the cuckolded husband of a secret lover claimed some, while others insisted the French Secret Service had assassinated him. With the Germans gearing up for another war, the French could ill-afford to have the man who'd once tried to broker a secret peace deal with the Kaiser on the Belgian throne. Despite the mysterious circumstances surrounding Albert's death, no evidence for either theory has ever come to light.

HET LAATSTE NIEUWS

-DAGBLAD-

219.478

De Dood van Koning Albert

HET TRAGISCHE ONGELUK IN DE BERGEN

De droeve Mare

© Alamy

And it was here that Albert would remain for the rest of the war, fighting alongside his men – it was rumoured on both sides of the line that German soldiers never shot directly at Albert when he was spotted at the Front, as a mark of respect for a king who'd stuck by his people.

Although he met regularly with his ministers and military advisers, Albert alone took responsibility for all operations in the field for fear that his generals and politicians would try to align the Belgian military too closely with the Allies. Almost from the start, his government had taken the view that Belgium must subordinate itself to the Allied crusade, sacrificing itself to the cause if necessary. Albert, however, was determined that his troops would not be used to further the war objectives of his allies.

For France the conflict was an opportunity to avenge its defeat to Germany in the Franco-Prussian war of 1870-1 and to recapture lands it had lost then. For the British, coming to the aid of poor little Belgium might have been its official reason for getting involved, but in reality it was all about protecting the Empire – which the kaiser very much had his eye on. No, the Belgian army's sole mandate, Albert insisted, was to liberate its own country from German occupation and to re-establish the nation as independent and neutral state.

He also refused requests from both the British and the French that he place the Belgian army under Allied command, telling them that he was forbidden to do so on constitutional grounds. His real reasons, however, had less to do with political protocol and more to do with his own conscience. "I alone will be held responsible for my country's misfortunes," he wrote in his diary at the start of the war, and as the horror of the conflict unfolded he did whatever he could to protect his people from its worst excesses. Albert was shocked at the way both the French and British leadership fed the lives of an entire generation into the meat grinder of the Western Front, watching on in horror at the senseless slaughter that took place at Verdun, the Somme and Passchendaele. Instead of committing his troops to big Allied offensives, which would have wiped out the remains of his small army, Albert employed them in a defensive role to protect the part of Flanders they still controlled and the vital seaports they held.

For Albert the priority clearly wasn't just to hold the line. He was desperate to liberate his people who were trapped living under German occupation. But as the war ground on he began to have serious doubts that a military solution would work, harbouring fears that his entire country might be laid to waste by the Allies as they pursued their stated aim of forcing the Germans out of Belgium. So he began exploring the possibility of a diplomatic solution, and in late 1915 agreed to secret discussions with the Germans.

His confidant, Professor Emile Waxweiler, was sent to Zürich to meet with the German diplomat Hans-Veit zu Toerring-Jettenbach, who also just happened to be Albert's brother-in-law. Albert wasn't interested in creating a separate peace with Germany, but he was keen to know what it would take to restore Belgium's independence and territorial integrity. If Belgium didn't need liberating, he figured, the Allies' primary excuse for fighting would no longer exist and maybe, just maybe, all sides could be persuaded to sit around a negotiating table. His hopes, however, were short-lived. Waxweiler was killed in a traffic accident in May 1916, and attempts to find a replacement capable of conducting such sensitive negotiations failed largely because his own government had now completely sided with the Allies in the belief that the war must be fought to the bitter end.

Albert visiting an aviation base with Messrs Poincaré and Millerand

© Alamy

***Left:** Newspaper announcing Albert's death. In the photo of the king's body at the bottom of the page his head is heavily bandaged, masking his injuries*

"ALBERT NEVER GOT THE PEACEFUL SOLUTION HE BELIEVED POSSIBLE BUT HE STAYED TRUE TO HIS PRINCIPLES"

As the war raged on and the death toll spiralled, a desperate Albert now made his desire for a peaceful solution to be sought known to his French and British allies. But they were having none of it. The war would be won by crushing Germany, whatever the cost, and his arguments were dismissed as defeatist.

Albert never got the peaceful solution he believed possible but he stayed true to his principles throughout the war and his army was spared participation in offensive operations. Only at the end of September 1918, as the Allies geared up for their last big push, did he allow his troops to join Army Group Flanders in the liberation of Belgium. Consisting of British, French and Belgian Divisions, Albert successfully led the final offensive, finally freeing his country of German occupation. When he finally re-entered Brussels on 22 November 1918, he was greeted as a hero. The war was over. The kaiser fled to Holland, where he'd remain in exile for the rest of his days, and Albert had his kingdom back, along with the peace he'd prayed so hard for.

He now picked up where he'd left off before the slaughter had started, looking for ways to improve the lives of his subjects. Before 1918 was even over, he'd helped establish a three-party government and created universal suffrage in Belgium, extending voting rights to all adult males. The following year he attended the Paris Peace Conference where he met with leaders from Britain, France and the United States. Here he successfully argued to revise the 1839 Treaty of London that had at Belgium's birth established the country's neutrality and underwritten its security with promises of military intervention in the event of an invasion. Never again would Belgium be used as an excuse for the great European powers to unleash their armies on one another.

He also campaigned for clemency where Germany was concerned; strongly advising against a harsh, restrictive treaty designed to curb future German aggression on the grounds that it may prove antagonistic. This voice of reason was once again drowned out by a din of angry voices. Yes, Belgium had been the principle victim of the war, and while the Allies had every sympathy for what it had endured, this was no time for forgiveness. This was a time for vengeance. The Treaty of Versailles, which the conference subsequently spat out, reflected this, and by imposing its harsh conditions on the defeated Germans the seeds for the next, even more terrible conflict were sown.

He returned to Belgium and spent the next 15 years helping to guide his country through the rebuilding process. WWI had left Belgium shattered and the post-war period saw it blighted by economic crisis and ethnic tensions. Albert helped solve the former by initiating public work programmes to tackle unemployment, redeveloping industries destroyed by the war and, in 1926, by the introduction of a new monetary system. The cultural conflicts – which sprang up between Belgium's Flemish speakers and its Francophone Walloon population – meanwhile, were assuaged with beneficent legislation and by Albert's unifying presence as a leader the nation could rally around. He even changed the family surname in 1920 from the Germanic-sounding Saxe-Coburg-Gotha (just as his relative Britain's King George V had done in 1917) to align himself more closely with his people. Depending on the part of the country he was in he was either Albert de Belgique, or the more Flemish-sounding Albert van België.

The man who had survived so much, however, would not live past middle age. As someone who'd spent his entire life pitting himself against mammoth obstacles, it should come as no surprise to learn that in his down time, Albert liked nothing more than to climb mountains. An experienced and passionate alpinist, the 58-year-old monarch set off alone on 17 February 1934 to tackle Roche du Vieux Bon Dieu at Marches-les-Dames in Ardennes not far from the city of Namur, which almost 20 years before had been a major target for the Kaiser's troops. His body was found at the bottom a steep drop the next day and when news of his death was announced, the entire Belgium nation was plunged into mourning. The people had lost their beloved soldier king.

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- D van Basten, *History Of The Great War: The Beginning Events, Book 1 The Battle Of Liege*, Amazon 2016

Image: Wiki / PD / Gov

***Left:** The Rape of Belgium was a propaganda series released in the US in 1917*

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On the lookout during the Battle of the Marne, a decisive victory for the Allied forces

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DODECANESE ISLANDS OF GREECE
23 MAY - 17 AUGUST 1480

SIEGE OF RHODES

1480

WORDS WILLIAM E. WELSH

OPPOSING FORCES

OTTOMAN ARMY

LEADER
Mesih Pasha

SIPAHIS, IRREGULARS, AND ARTILLERYMEN
12,000

JANISSARIES
3,000

SHIPS
104 galleys

GUNS
16 giant bombards, as well as mortars and smaller ordnance

VS

HOSPITALLER ARMY

LEADER
Grand Master Pierre d'Aubusson

KNIGHTS
300

SERGEANTS
300

MERCENARIES/MILITIA
2,000

SHIPS
Unknown

GUNS
Unknown

The Ottoman Turks besieged the citadel of Rhodes with their gunpowder artillery and elite janissaries, but they could not outfight the martial Knights Hospitaller

Hospitaller Grand Master Pierre d'Aubusson receives thanks for having forced the Ottoman Turks to raise their siege of Rhodes

© Alamy

Knights Hospitaller Grand Master Pierre d'Aubusson stood proudly in his new suit of gold damascene-decorated armour atop the battlements of the citadel of Rhodes on 24 May 1480. He watched intently as the Ottoman host prepared a great battery a short distance north of the stronghold. The Turkish soldiers busied themselves preparing a battery of three giant basilisks that they aimed at the Tower of St Nicholas, which stood like a lonely sentinel on the far end of a quarter-mile long mole on the east side of the port's narrow galley harbour.

The heavy set, round-faced 57-year-old commander had prepared for this moment, and so had his predecessors. He was fearless in the face of the Turkish assault. Ever since Constantinople fell to Ottoman Sultan Mehmed II in 1453, the Knights Hospitallers, whose base was the island in the Aegean Sea, had expected an invasion.

D'Aubusson, who came from central France, had served as a Knight Hospitaller on Rhodes for 26 years. During that time, he had gained invaluable experience in diplomacy, naval warfare and siegecraft. During his tenure as grand master, he had overseen the construction of new towers, bulwarks, and batteries to enhance the citadel's defences. He was confident that he had done everything in his power to prepare for the inevitable siege of the fortress by the Ottoman Turks. The hour of reckoning had come, and he and his brother-knights were ready to cross swords with the Turks.

Benedictine lay brother Gerard de Martigues of Provence founded the Order of the Hospital of St John of Jerusalem in 1099 during the First Crusade. Although it began as a hospital to care for Christian pilgrims, 14 years later it became a monastic military order responsible for protecting fortresses and territory in the Holy Land. When the Egyptian Mamluks drove the Christians out of the Holy Land in 1291, the order relocated to the island of Rhodes in the Dodecanese archipelago, which the Hospitallers took by force from Genoese pirate Andrea Morisco in 1307. Pope Clement V confirmed the Hospitallers right to occupy the island in 1307.

The Knights Hospitaller on Rhodes built a small navy with galleys built in Genoa and Marseilles in order to protect Christian merchant vessels transporting cargo from the Levant to European markets. The island of Rhodes, which is 40 miles long and 20 miles wide, was home to 10,000 Greek Byzantine residents who lived throughout the large island. The fortress of Rhodes and its two adjacent artificial harbours, situated on the northeastern tip of the island, dated back to classical antiquity.

Although the Byzantine Empire, which once controlled the island, had built land walls around the port, the Hospitallers set to work immediately improving its fortifications by adding seawalls. Inside the citadel, the brother-knights and sergeants of the military order were divided by language and geography into eight groups: Provence, Auvergne, France, Italy, Aragon, Navarre, Germany and England. In the event of a siege, each group defended a different part of the 2.5-mile circuit of walls around the fortress.

The citadel of Rhodes possessed two artificial harbours with protective moles wide enough to be fortified with trenches and towers. The Hospitallers used the northern harbour for their galleys, and the larger main port adjacent to the south for mercantile vessels. From a geographical standpoint, its one major drawback was that it was just 12 miles from

The Turks twice stormed the Tower of St Nicolas but could not capture it

© Alamy

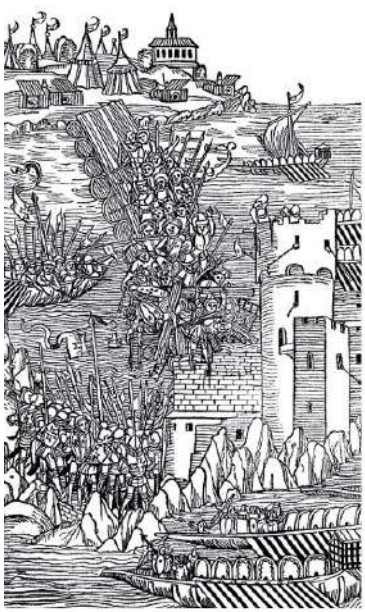
the Anatolian mainland, and therefore the warlike Ottoman sultan could transport an invasion army by ship to the island.

The Ottoman Empire began as an Islamic emirate founded by Osman Ghazi in northeastern Anatolia at the end of the 13th century. It expanded west into the Balkans and eastward through Anatolia. In successful siege of Constantinople, Sultan Mehmed II 'The Conqueror' had relied heavily on giant bronze cannon, known as basilisks and bombards, which had the capability of demolishing the metropolis' high outer walls through sustained bombardment.

The Byzantine Empire was in its death throes at the time and the conquest completed its demise. Afterwards, the sultan went to war with the Venetian Republic. He succeeded in completing the Ottoman conquest of Greece and most of the northern Agean islands.

After the fall of Constantinople, the Knights Hospitaller expected an imminent attack on their citadel by the victorious Ottoman army. For that reason, they began to make improvements to their fortress so that it might withstand the Ottoman gunpowder artillery. In the decades preceding the siege, the knights had constructed three stone towers at the end of the moles that protected the two artificial harbours. The Tower of St Nicholas graced the long mole on the eastern side of the galley harbour that housed the Hospitaller navy. The towers of Naillac and St Angelo were perched on shorter moles to defend the west and east sides, respectively, of the main port. Altogether, the port-city had thirteen towers, ten of which were spaced at regular intervals along the land walls, as well as the three that guarded the two harbours.

The Hospitaller military order was organised into eight groups by language with each one assigned to defend a section of the city's walls



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01 TURKS BOMBARD THE TOWER

The Ottomans establish a siege battery along the west shore of the galley harbour to bombard the Tower of St Nicholas guarding the northern galley harbour. The Turkish commander wants to capture the tower in order to control the harbour.

02 SKIRMISHES AT NORTH WALL

Knights Hospitaller artillerymen unleash counter-battery fire from the Tower of St Nicholas and the northern curtain wall in an attempt to knock out the Ottoman basilisks firing on the tower, while arquebusiers, archers and crossbowmen stationed in trenches at the base of the main wall hold back the Turkish infantry.

03 FIRST ASSAULT ON TOWER

After ten days of sustained bombardment, Turkish ships land hundreds of Ottoman regular and militia troops on the mole on 3 June where the Tower of St Nicholas is located. The Ottoman infantry fight hard but the Hospitallers repulse them.

04 TURKS DEPLOY SIEGE TOWER

The Ottoman siege battery continues to bombard not only the Tower of St Nicholas, but also a newly constructed timber palisade on the mole. Meanwhile, the Turks construct a giant belfry, which serves as a platform for Ottoman archers to unleash a storm of arrows on Hospitallers defending the north walls of the fortress and the mole enclosing the galley harbour.

05 TURKS ATTACK ACROSS FLOATING BRIDGE

The Turks install a pontoon bridge between the shoreline and the far end of the mole under cover of darkness on the night of 18 June. The following morning, janissaries launch a ferocious assault on the rubble of the Tower of St Nicholas. Hospitaller knights, sergeants, and mercenaries once again repulse the assault, and their cannon destroy the bridge.

06 TURKS ASSAIL SOUTH WALL

The Ottoman commander shifts the majority of his siege guns overland to the south side of the fortress to bombard the south walls. The siege guns are gradually advanced closer to the walls in zig-zag covered trenches. The heavy guns succeed in demolishing part of the wall near the southeast corner.

07 HOSPITALLERS PLUG BREACH IN SOUTH WALL

The Turks try to exploit the breach in the outer wall, but they find that the Hospitallers have constructed a timber bulwark just inside the wall that effectively plugs the breach. The Turks launch repeated assaults in the first half of July, but they fail to break through the makeshift barrier.

08 HOSPITALLERS ROUT TURKS

The Ottoman commander commits his remaining janissary heavy infantry to an all-out attack through the breach in the south wall on July 27. They furiously assail the timber bulwark defended by Hospitaller troops and their mercenary soldiers. A Hospitaller counterattack routs the Turks.

Map illustration: Rocio Espin

© Alamy

Mesih Pasha's army breached the outer wall of the port of Rhodes, but the Hospitallers counterattacked and drove them out

***Right:** Turks armed with halberds, swords and maces battle Hospitaller knights wielding two-handed swords*

Sultan Mehmed did not initially intend to launch a formal siege of Rhodes. He repeatedly sent envoys to Rhodes to request tribute after Constantinople fell to his army. The sultan might have been inclined to leave the Hospitallers alone during his reign provided they paid a nominal tribute and refrained from attacking Ottoman merchant vessels. But Knights Hospitaller Grand Master Jean de Lastic, who ruled Rhodes from 1437 to 1454, steadfastly refused to pay tribute. His successors did the same.

D'Aubusson, who was elected grand master in 1476, oversaw construction work that shortened the three harbour towers so that they could better withstand gunpowder artillery and also the violent recoil of their own cannons. The Hospitallers made the most dramatic changes to the Tower of St Nicholas. They shortened the tower so that it was more like a fort. It had artillery batteries on two stories and was protected by an angled bulwark.

In keeping with the latest advances in Italian fortifications, D'Aubusson also supervised the construction of a faussebraye, an Italian word for outerworks, which protected the landward walls of the fortress. The faussebraye not only held back assault troops from moving scaling ladders and siege towers against the main walls, but also protected the base of the main walls from mining and artillery fire. Last, D'Aubusson stockpiled enough food stores and ammunition to enable the garrison to hold out for two years.

After several attempts during his reign to get the knights to pay tribute to him and accept status as a vassal state, Mehmed resolved to attack the island. Instead of leading the assault on the fortress of Rhodes personally, as he had done at Constantinople, he entrusted the siege to Vizier Mesih Pasha, a Byzantine Greek who had converted to Islam. Two Byzantine Greeks who had visited Rhodes and assisted the sultan in his negotiations with the Knights Hospitallers told Mehmed that the citadel's towers and walls were crumbling. They also claimed that some of the Hospitallers were on the verge of mutiny, and the garrison lacked sufficient supplies to withstand a siege. None of this was true. On this flawed intelligence, Mehmed sent the vizier to take the fortress by force.

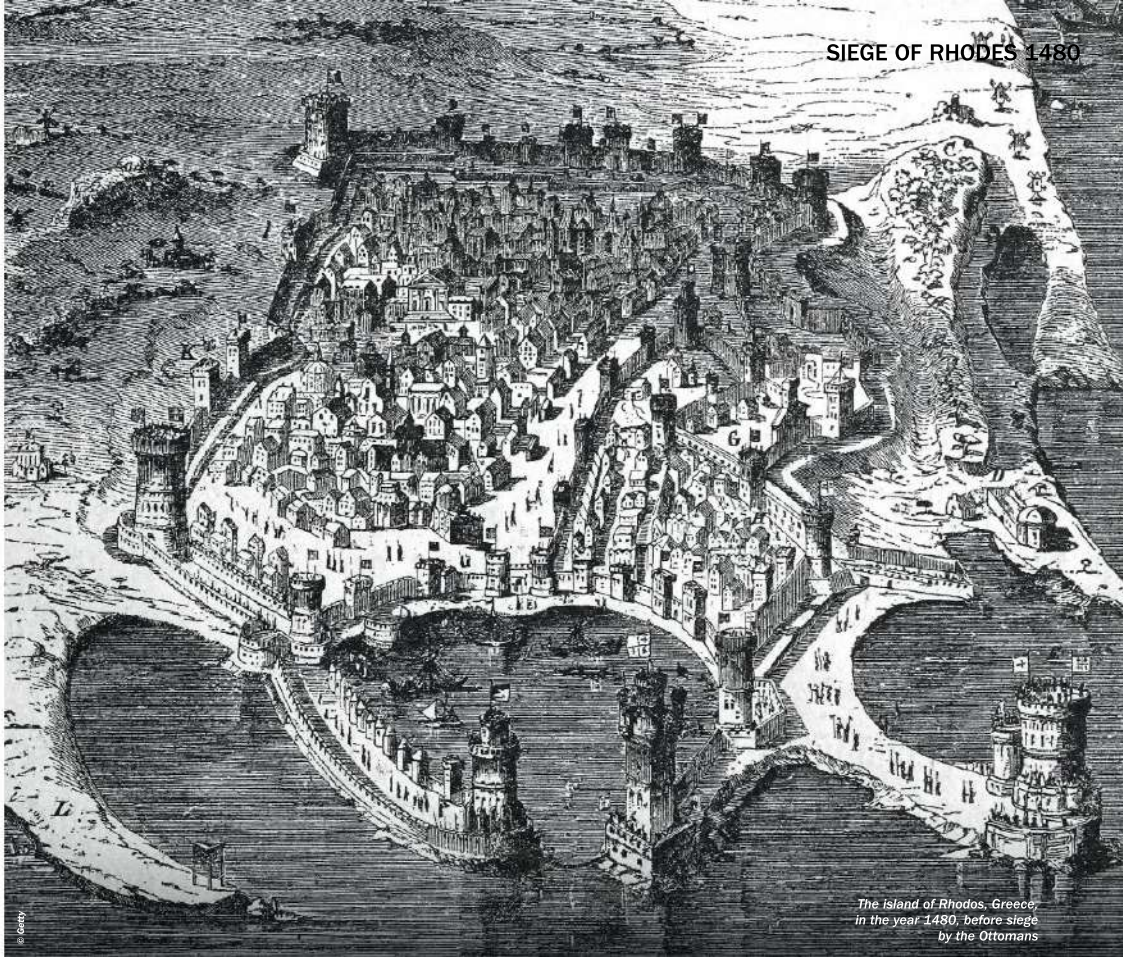
After a failed attempt to secure a foothold on Rhodes in December 1479, the Ottoman fleet returned to Rhodes on 23 May 1480. The Turks immediately established a siege battery, which consisted of three 18-foot-long basilisks, aimed at the Tower of St Nicholas. Mesih's first step was to try to capture the galley harbour so that he could bring heavy artillery and siege equipment right up to the northeastern corner of the citadel, which was defended by the French Hospitallers.

The guns began a steady bombardment of the Tower of St Nicholas, but it was a slow process given that each of the cumbersome bronze guns, which flung 1,400-pound stone balls, were difficult to load and fire. The Ottoman bronze basilisks were "of an incredible size and power", D'Aubusson wrote afterwards.

The Ottoman army had 16 of the giant basilisks, as well as mortars and culverins. They began firing the mortars into the city to terrify the local populace inside. The three basilisks trained on the Tower of St Nicholas succeeded in inflicting considerable damage on

"THE BOMBARDMENT OF THE TOWER OF ST NICHOLAS CONTINUED UNABATED FOR 10 DAYS DURING WHICH TIME THE BASILISKS FIRED 300 STONE BALLS"

© Alamy



© Getty

The island of Rhodos, Greece, in the year 1480, before siege by the Ottomans

the thick stone walls. The bombardment of the Tower of St Nicholas continued unabated for ten days during which time the basilisks fired three-hundred stone balls. Realising that the Ottoman commander was fixated on the Tower of St Nicholas, D'Aubusson sent additional troops to Fabrizio Del Carretto – the knight responsible for directing the troops defending the tower.

While Del Carretto and his men repaired breaches in the tower's defences with timber and stone, D'Aubusson ordered groups of soldiers and sailors, as well as hundreds of Greek residents, to repair and improve the mole's defences. Working day and night, the labourers built a wooden palisade with an earthen rampart on the mole.

The Hospitallers deployed arquebusiers, longbowmen, and crossbowmen in the earthworks on the mole, which exchanged shots with Turkish arquebusiers and bowmen along the shoreline of the galley harbour. Meanwhile, the Turks skirmished with the French Hospitallers posted in the faussebraye in front of the north walls.

The Turks launched their first major assault on the Tower of St Nicholas on 3 June. Ottoman galleys landed troops at end of the mole. The assault failed in the face of determined resistance. The Hospitallers met the attacking force with a barrage of musket balls and crossbow bolts. In addition, some of the Christian troops hurled terra cotta pots containing Greek fire at the Ottoman vessels, as they approached the shore to disembark troops.

Over the course of the next two weeks, the Ottoman artillery continued to shell the Tower of St Nicholas. By the end of this period, the tower was for all intents and purposes demolished. But the Ottoman troops still needed to occupy the mole if they wanted to use the harbour.

As the two sides continued to fire artillery and missile weapons at each other each day, Ottoman engineers built a floating bridge. Mesih Pasha intended to have his troops install the bridge so that they could use it to fight their way onto the mole. The Turks placed the floating bridge under cover of darkness on the night of June 18-19. The bridge was a work "of wonderful skill", D'Aubusson wrote in his account of the siege.

In the pre-dawn hours, elite Turkish janissary slave-soldiers, wearing their customary tall Bork white-felt caps, began to cross the bridge. The fighting grew in intensity once the Sun had risen. In addition to the Christian arquebusiers, archers and crossbowmen stationed on the mole and in the rubble of the tower, Hospitaller knights clad in plate armour wielding deadly two-handed swords cut down scores of janissaries. Hospitaller batteries still operating on the mole, as well as atop the northeastern walls, opened a furious fire on the bridge in an effort to destroy it. As janissaries clad in mail-and-plate cuirasses wielding halberds, maces and yatagans fought hand-to-hand with Del Carretto's troops at the tower, Ottoman galleys deposited other Turkish troops on the mole from the seaward side. D'Aubusson hurried reinforcements onto the mole to assist those already engaged.

To fend off the Ottoman galleys, the Knights Hospitaller manoeuvred a few of their galleys out of the commercial harbour into the open waters. The galleys towed fireships which floated into the middle of the attacking Turkish ships – they succeeded in setting fire to and sinking four Ottoman galleys.

It did not take long for the Hospitaller cannon to destroy the pontoon bridge. Having been struck repeatedly by stone shot, the bridge eventually collapsed. The Ottoman janissaries had been crossing the bridge six abreast, and when the bridge collapsed hundreds of them drowned. In just a few hours the Ottoman army lost 2,500 men. One of the dead Turks who washed up on the shore after the battle was Ibrahim Bey, Sultan Mehmed II's son-in-law.

Mesih Pasha decided it was time to try to breach the land walls. He had information

Image: Wiki / PD / Art

Two Neapolitan ships arrive with reinforcements at the end of the siege

that the south wall was not as thick as those facing west or north, so he decided to shift the majority of his basilisks to the south side of the citadel. He issued orders for the deployment of 10 of the 16 basilisks to bombard the southeastern corner of the wall where the Italian Hospitallers were posted, as well as the Tower of St Angelo.

In addition to the sustained fire of the basilisks, the Turks also positioned their mortars to fire into the citadel from the south side. The mortar fire reduced the Jewish quarter in the southern part of the fortress to rubble. Worse yet, the Turks began shooting flaming arrows inside the fortress in an effort to terrorise the Greek residents hunkered down inside the citadel.

D'Aubusson had a trick up his sleeve. The Hospitallers had a giant catapult inside the fortress which they used to hurl massive stones down on the basilisk emplacements. In addition, the knights trained the guns inside the Tower of St Angelo against the Muslim siege works. Just as he had organised work parties to improve the defences of the mole, D'Aubusson gathered teams to put out the fires started by the enemy's flaming arrows.

By the middle of July, the Turks had made considerable progress against the south wall. Their artillery had demolished a section of the faussebraye, as well as knocked down part of the main wall in the southeastern corner. To stretch the resources of the garrison, Mesih Pasha had deliberately retained a large number of troops and six basilisks on the north side. To split the Hospitaller forces, he often issued orders for simultaneous attacks on both the north and south walls.

The Italian contingent of the Hospitallers, which was heavily reinforced by troops from sections of the main walls not under attack, fought desperately to contain repeated assaults by Turkish infantry. Mesih Pasha held back his remaining janissaries for the point at which he felt his troops could fully exploit the breach.

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D'Aubusson put hundreds of labourers, townspeople and peasants to work constructing a palisade in the Jewish quarter to plug the breach in the south wall. As they had on the mole, the Hospitallers built a palisade of timbers with an earthen rampart behind it. The defenders of the new defensive position repulsed several savage attacks by Turkish regulars and militia.

After 37 days of constant bombardment and multiple assaults against both the north and south walls, Mesih Pasha was on the verge of raising the siege. But he decided to launch one more assault in which he would commit the last of his janissaries in an attempt to overrun the barrier that defended the breach in the south wall.

On the morning of 27 July the Turks, as they did before every major assault, began blowing trumpets and banging kettle drums to create a din designed to intimidate their adversaries. The assault began with irregular militia making the first charge and absorbing some of the missile fire from the Hospitallers, and then the fearsome janissaries surged forward.

The fighting ebbed and flowed, but after most of the janissaries lay dead and dying on the ground in front of the palisade and on the rubble where the curtain wall had collapsed, the remaining Turks fell back. The Hospitallers captured the Turkish commander's standard as the defeated Turks withdrew to the safety of their trenches.

At that point, Mesih Pasha decided to raise the siege. But the Ottoman army remained in place for 11 days while he attempted to negotiate a truce with the Hospitallers. He offered them self-rule if they would agree to become vassals of the sultan, but the offer was no different than what Mehmed II had offered before the siege. D'Aubusson declined the offer. While the Ottoman army was breaking camp, D'Aubusson ordered a victory parade inside the citadel. It took the Turks ten days to load their equipment on their carracks and galleys. Some of their siege equipment built on site was burned instead. During the course of the 86-day siege, the Turks had fired 3,500 stone shots from their basilisks. The Turks lost 9,000 men during the course of the siege.

"THE TURKS WOULD NOT RETURN FOR ANOTHER 42 YEARS. WHEN THEY DID BESIEGE THE CITADEL AGAIN, THOUGH, FATE WAS NOT KIND TO THE HOSPITALLERS"

In an ironic twist, just as the Ottoman fleet was sailing away on a northeast bearing, two transport ships bearing Neapolitan and Papal troops dispatched by King Ferdinand of Naples and Pope Sixtus IV, respectively, arrived with supplies and reinforcements. A papal envoy handed D'Aubusson a letter from the Pope in which the pontiff pledged additional military support. D'Aubusson was irked because he had implored the Papacy and secular rulers in western Europe for additional troops in the years preceding the siege and received none. In the final analysis, the martial Hospitallers had fought off the Turks by themselves, and therefore they alone took credit for the victory.

When Mesih Pasha reported to Sultan Mehmed the outcome of the siege, the sultan flew into a rage. He immediately began plans to personally lead another armada against the Hospitallers at Rhodes, but he died in May 1481 before he could launch another siege.

The Turks would not return to Rhodes for another 42 years. However, when they did besiege the citadel again, fate was not kind to the Hospitallers. Heavily outnumbered, Grand Master Philippe Villiers de L'Isle-Adam decided to negotiate the surrender of the island to the Ottomans. Under the terms of the surrender, the Hospitallers were allowed to safely evacuate the fortress. Despite this defeat, the resourceful and resilient Hospitallers, driven from Rhodes by force in 1522, once again found a new base on Malta which they took possession of in 1530 when the King of the Two Sicilies donated the island to the order to use as their new base.

Pierre d'Aubusson during the siege of Rhodes

© Getty

TUPOLEV TU-95 BEAR

The Cold War Soviet icon still projecting Russian prestige after seven decades

WORDS **STUART HADAWAY**

The Tupolev Tu-95, dubbed the 'Bear' in the NATO reporting system, was a Soviet icon during the Cold War, and it remains a highly visible symbol of Russian power. Designed in the early 1950s, the aircraft remains arguably the fastest propeller-driven aircraft ever built, and its speed and long range make it a viable intercontinental strategic bomber even now, almost 70 years after its first flight. Now, as then, the Bear is used to regularly probe NATO and Far Eastern airspace, testing defence readiness and resolve, and projecting Russian military strength.

The type began life as a larger and improved version of the Tu-4, which was a direct copy of American Boeing B-29 Superfortresses interred during the Second World War. Over subsequent decades the Bear has been repeatedly updated and upgraded, with one such programme in process at the time of writing. Over 20 variants have been produced, not including the Tu-114 airliner and the Tu-142 maritime reconnaissance version. Although production ceased in 1993, the Bear looks set to remain a cornerstone of Russian air power.

AGGRESSIVE CHIN
Since the 1980s, Bears have been receiving a distinctive jutting 'chin', as radar and avionics to control their cruise missiles have been added to the nose.

"THE AIRCRAFT REMAINS ARGUABLY THE FASTEST PROPELLER-DRIVEN AIRCRAFT EVER BUILT"

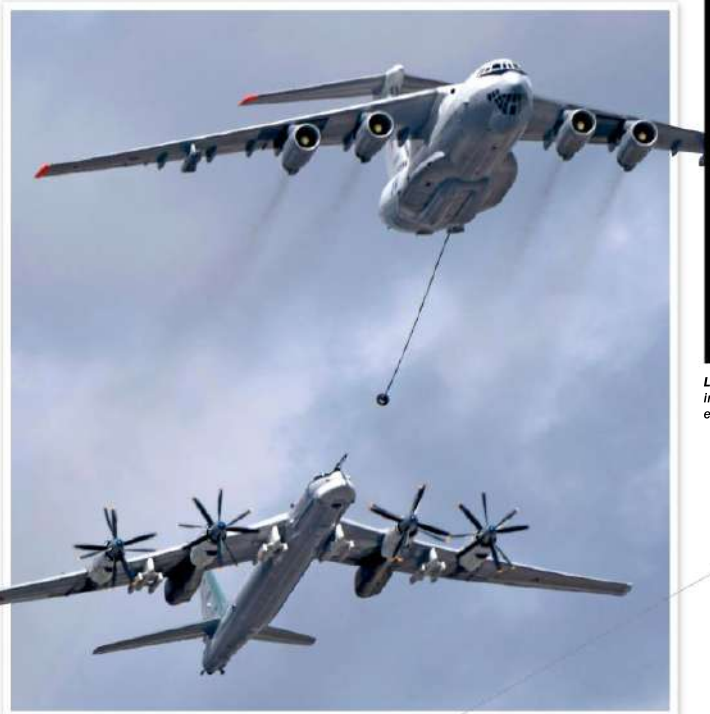
AIMING BLISTERS
Earlier models had blisters containing periscopes for the aiming of the dorsal and ventral remote-controlled defensive autocannons.

POWERFUL BUT NOISY
The four twin-propeller engines provide some 44,000kW (60,000hp) of power, but create significant acoustic and radar noise, making the Bear hard to hide.

SWEPT BACK
The Tu-95 is unique as a mass produced propeller aircraft with swept back wings. As one of the fastest propeller-driven aircraft ever flown, the aerodynamics justify the design.

TUPOLEV TU-95 BEAR

COMMISSIONED:	1952
ORIGIN:	RUSSIA
LENGTH:	46.17M (151FT 5IN)
WINGSPAN:	50.1M (164FT 4IN)
ENGINE:	4 X KUZNETSOV NK-12 11,000KW (15,000HP) TURBOPROP
CREW:	6-7
PRIMARY WEAPON:	UP TO 15,000KG (33,000LB) BOMBS OR 16 AIR LAUNCHED CRUISE MISSILES
SECONDARY WEAPON:	2 X 23MM (0.906IN) AM23 AUTOCANNONS



***Left:** The Bear's already impressive range can be further extended by air-to-air refuelling*

Illustration: Battlefield Design

TU-95 'Bear' H photographed from a RAF Typhoon Quick Reaction Alert aircraft (QRA) with 6 Squadron from RAF Leuchars in Scotland in April 2014

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Above: *A Bear Tu-95F with open bomb bay doors in 1987. Cruise missiles could also be externally mounted under the wings*

Above: *A cruise missile loaded into a Tu-95 for use over Syria*

"CURRENT MODELS CAN CARRY UP TO 16 KH-55 AIR LAUNCHED CRUISE MISSILES ON UNDER-WING PYLONS AND ON ROTARY LAUNCHERS IN THE BOMB BAY"

Below: The Tsar Bomba – at 50kt the most powerful bomb ever built – was tested by a modified Tu-95

ARMAMENT

The Bear has used a wide range of weaponry over time, including a heavy load of either conventional or nuclear bombs. Current models can carry up to 16 Kh-55 air launched cruise missiles on under-wing pylons and on rotary launchers in the bomb bay, each with a 440kg (880lb) conventional or a 250kt nuclear warhead. Older types had three defensive gun turrets – in the tail, and in ventral and dorsal turrets on the rear fuselage, the latter two being operated remotely. Current types retain only the tail guns.

One of the most distinctive features of the Bear is the swept back wings

The Tu-95 was also developed into the Tu-126 Moss airborne early warning and control aircraft, though few were ever built

DESIGN

The Tu-95 is of all-metal construction, with a pressurised nose section containing the cockpit and most of the crew and avionics. The wings are highly distinctive, with a 35° backward sweep of the main wings and tail planes usually associated with jet aircraft. The main spar passes through the fuselage forward of the bomb bay. A substantial tricycle undercarriage is used, with the wing wheels being retracted into the long nacelle behind the inner engines.

ENGINE

The Bear uses four Kuznetsov coupled turboprop engines, each fitted with two four-bladed contra-rotating propellers. The long engine nacelles stand well forward of the leading edges of the wings, and are each secured by four high-tensile stainless steel struts to bear the enormous forces generated. The most recent type, the Tu-95MS, is the most powerful turboprop aircraft ever flown, with improved NK-12MA engines with 14 stage axial flow compressors, and the propellers and compressors driven by five-stage axial turbines. They can push the Bear to speeds of 845kmh (525mph) and reach ranges of 15,000km (9300ml).

The engines contain a complex system of contra-rotating propellers, the blades of which are highly visible on radar

All images © Alamy unless otherwise stated

The tail gunner position on the Bear, the only crew position outside the nose section

***Inset, below:** The cockpit section of the Bear is highly functional, with crew comfort a secondary consideration*

COCKPIT / CABIN / CREW COMPARTMENT

The crew compartments for the early Bears were cramped, dark, and poorly laid out. Crew comfort was given little consideration, despite the aircraft being intended to undertake operations of up to ten hours' duration. Conditions have improved over time, but it remains a fairly basic compartment. The two pilots have a relatively unsophisticated but functional cockpit layout, with the rest of the crew – one or two navigators, flight engineer and onboard systems operator – sitting behind. None of the crew has ejection seats.

Images: Wiki / PD / Vitaly V. Kuzmin

An image of growing East-West tensions – an RAF Eurofighter Typhoon escorting a Bear

"THE RUSSIANS CONTINUED TO DEVELOP THE AIRCRAFT, WHICH FINALLY SAW ITS COMBAT DEBUT IN 2015 OVER SYRIA, 49 YEARS AFTER ENTERING SERVICE"

SERVICE HISTORY

The Tupolev Tu-95 first flew in 1952, and entered service in 1956 with the Soviet Air Force Long Range Aviation branch as an intercontinental bomber, to specifically fill the nuclear strike role. A few years later, modified versions entered service with the Soviet Navy, and more variants including Electronic Counter Measures and Electronic Intelligence types followed. Several purely experiment types were also operated, including the Tu-95V to test drop the Tsar Bomba, the largest thermonuclear bomb ever built.

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, several former Soviet republics operated Bears, although only the Ukraine kept them in service for any length of time. The Russians continued to develop the aircraft, which finally saw its combat debut in 2015 over Syria, 49 years after entering service. With the current upgrade programme ongoing, the Bear is expected to be in service for at least another two decades.

A classic Cold War image – a USN F-14 Tomcat escorting a Bear

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HOME FRONT

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A TRUE HERO-WREN

WORDS **OLIVIA SMITH**

© Christian Lamb

"I heard on my radio that our troops had landed on the beaches that I had so carefully mapped out in that tiny office beneath the stairs. It was a moment I shall remember for the rest of my life"

At 101, Christian Lamb shares her memories and experiences of serving as a Wren on the home front during World War II

When war was declared in 1939, Christian Lamb knew immediately she would join the Royal Navy. "As my father was now an admiral in that historic service, it seemed destined that I should become a member," she says. "The advertisement which suggested a Wren might free a sailor to go to sea made some sense and the thought of doing something really useful was very attractive."

The Women's Royal Naval Service (WRNS) had been founded in 1917. The leading ladies behind the organisation were Dame Katharine Furse and Dame Vera Laughton Mathews; by 1919 it had successfully recruited 7,000 Wrens including cooks and stewards, despatch riders, sail makers and those in intelligence. It is without a doubt that they began to succeed in their motto "Never at Sea", as they demonstrated the significant role women could play during wartime and allowed more men to support the front lines.

Like most wartime services, the Wrens were disbanded in 1919. But Furse believed in the significance of the Wrens and set up an association in 1920 to preserve the unique bonds of friendship formed between the women. Little did they know that less than 20 years later they would play another essential role in another world war.

As the daughter of Rear-Admiral Ronald Wolseley Oldham OBE, Christian is a woman with the Royal Navy embedded into her DNA. Her father too grew up under the familial influence of the Royal Navy and was only 12 years old when he turned up to HMS Britannia, Portsmouth, to begin his naval training. Having served in the First World War, being an eyewitness during the Gallipoli campaign, he started a family once peace was finalised and had them embark alongside his naval journey. The family spent just over two years in Malta, and in September 1931 they returned to London when Oldham, now an admiral, took up his duties.

To Christian, despite growing up around military figures, war was never something she could imagine turning up on her doorstep. When she was 18, she had left school and was staying in France with a French family,

Christian joined the Wrens when she was 19 and served for six years

© Christian Lamb

"The thought of doing something really useful was very attractive"

© Robert D. Anderson

planning her entry to Oxford. "During that time I managed not to open a single newspaper, so I had no idea what was going on in the outside world," she says. Reality hit when Christian received a telegram from her father, stating that war was imminent and she must come home immediately.

After the war had arrived, like many other women Christian decided she should do her bit. Originally thinking of taking the traditional route of becoming a VAD (Voluntary Aid Detachment) nurse, she enrolled in first aid classes to prepare herself. "[I] practised my bandaging on my long-suffering grandfather's bald head, though it did occur to me that any person who needed care for a head injury would be unlikely to come within my range. By the time it came to learning how to dress stumps, I had decided nursing was not my forte," she says.

At just 19 years old, Christian headed to London for an interview at the Wrens HQ, tucked next to Admiralty Arch in Trafalgar Square.

Senior Wren officer Nancy Osborne interviewed her. She asked her: "Can you type?" Christian could not, yet was offered the job there and then. "I was very disconcerted by this as I had not decided to join the WRNS to spend my life working in London among elderly ladies like her," she says. "I'd envisaged spending time in a port, replacing sailors who could then go to sea. The advertisement I'd responded to had suggested that was the general idea."

"WOMEN WERE NOT ALLOWED ON SHIPS THAT WERE GOING INTO ACTIVE SERVICE, BUT WRENS DID LOAD TORPEDOES ONTO SUBMARINES AND COMMAND AND CREW POWERFUL HARBOUR LAUNCHES"

Christian turned down Chief Officer Osborne's offer of a job at the WRNS HQ: "She suggested instead that I could go to the training establishment in Kensington and volunteer to become a coder or writer."

The first Wrens were admitted to the Royal Naval College in Greenwich to undertake officer training, cypher and administration courses. At its peak, the service had 74,000 officers and ratings, undertaking an expanded number of roles, including wireless telegraphists, electricians, and even piloting transport planes. Wrens were also prominent support staff at the Government Code and Cypher School at Bletchley Park. Women were not allowed on ships that were going into active service, but Wrens did load torpedoes onto submarines and command and crew powerful harbour launches. The boat crews also served as coastal mine-spotters, an important and dangerous job.

In January 1940, Christian began basic training at Campden Hill Road, Kensington. The Wrens' training facility was named HMS Pembroke. "There were a great many rules to be obeyed at HMS Pembroke – I was often in trouble for breaching them," she says. "The nine o'clock curfew was particularly frustrating. One barely had time to go out, and if you did go and found you had cut it rather fine to get back in time, there was no chance of affording a taxi on a Wren's allowance of ten shillings a week."

After a chance meeting with Osborne, Christian was able to take up a new role at HMS President, the WRNS HQ. The HQ job was not thrilling, and consisted mainly of sorting through the applications and references of people who had written in to join the Wrens.

She was sharing billets with other Wrens in North London when the Blitz began: "We were all sent home at about 4pm, to get home before dark if possible. We still had to go upstairs to the bathrooms, however. So I soon learned to distinguish between the engine noises of the German planes and our own; a very important distinction to be able to make.

"At bedtime, I would hurry to finish cleaning my teeth as the sound of brushing made it difficult to hear the shriek of an incoming bomb. We went home to this comfortable house, where one night a stick of bombs fell on this road and all the houses on the other side of the road. Every third house was bombed flat. It was gone."

Christian was based at Wren HQ for about a year before being promoted to Leading Wren. At age 20, she was put in charge of the degaussing range at Coalhouse Fort, East Tilbury, where she led a unit of 12 Wrens. "I was not expected to do anything too technical. My task was to direct operations, ordering ships over the range, and also for the general welfare of my Wren colleagues," she says.

Left: Wrens were trained in many disciplines, including semaphore

Below: Wrens arriving ready for duty

© Getty

© Getty

© Getty

Two Wrens plotting ship updates on Atlantic Wall

After a year it was suggested that Christian go before the Officer Selection Board. She was promoted and sent to attend the Officer Training Course at Greenwich. In late February 1942 her training was finished, and she was sent to Plymouth, where she was soon in charge of the Operations Room as the plotting officer of a watch.

There were four watches and four Wren ratings to a watch. The Royal Navy and the RAF Coastal Command shared a single huge operations room at Mount Wise. The area was divided into two even halves, with a vast map covering the wall at the Royal Navy's end, showing the entire Western Approaches including the whole North Atlantic Ocean. At the back of this room and facing the wall map at a raised level sat the senior Royal Navy and RAF officers of the day, who shared the space – with a glass division to separate them from the Operations Room.

"The maps were covered in transparent talc, upon which you could draw routes and write the latest information in coloured wax markers, while small models indicating convoys, ships or aircraft were moved accordingly," explains Christian. "The four Wren ratings stood by each of the four sides with headphones on to receive reports. The whole Atlantic was plotted and had to be kept to something like 10 minutes accuracy. Our working hours were as follows: from 1800 to 0900 (15 hours), then from 0900 the next day to 1800, with 48 hours off after that."

"IT WAS INTENSE AND EXCITING WORK AND OBVIOUSLY DETAIL WAS VITAL. IT WAS CRUCIAL THAT THE MAPS WERE 100% ACCURATE"

***Above:** Christian pictured here front row, far right, with her fellow Wrens in Belfast, 1942*

After another year in Plymouth, the whole station was moved to Liverpool and Christian was appointed to run a plot at Belfast. Just north of this port was the point at which many of the ships would gather to join the convoys crossing the Atlantic.

"A blip on the radar meant that there was a ship there and you could tell from the blip whether it was one or two ships, the speed it was going, the direction it was going. You can learn quite a lot from a radar blip. Next door to us and connected by a hatch was the cypher room, and all the signals (uncoded) were handed through to us as they came in."

For Christian, being in Ireland was an eye-opening experience after three years of war spent in England and Scotland. Unlike in England, where food was strictly rationed, there was plenty of food in Belfast.

Here she met Lieutenant John Lamb DSC, the First Lieutenant of HMS Oribi, and they

© Christian Lamb

Christian met Lieutenant John Lamb while serving in Belfast

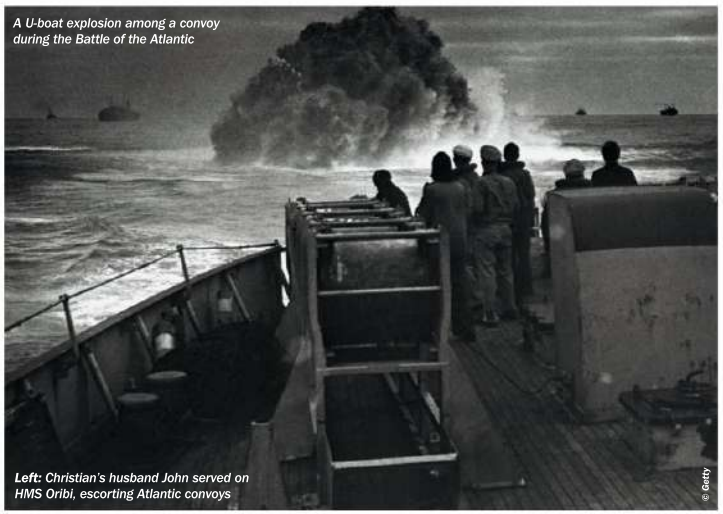
© Christian Lamb

John and Christian were married in London on 15 December 1943

© Christian Lamb

Christian pictured in 1945

© Christian Lamb


A U-boat explosion among a convoy during the Battle of the Atlantic

***Left:** Christian's husband John served on HMS Oribi, escorting Atlantic convoys*

© Getty

became engaged to be married after just ten days. This moment of happiness was cut short, as John's ship had to be recalled back to sea to escort a very slow convoy – ONS 5.

Christian was responsible for plotting John's route from her base in Belfast: "He was in this battle and I thought here I had secured this man and I was going to lose him." John's destroyer engaged in fierce fighting against German submarines: "It was an amazing battle that had something like 40 U-boats fighting this convoy. His ship HMS Oribi rammed a U-boat and sank it, which is very exciting for them. All my friends tried to stop me from being on watch but because we got a lot of signals from this battle, we knew exactly what was going on. In the plotting room, I [knew] that each signal that came in was already a couple of minutes out of date and that in the time it had taken to reach the plot, anything might have happened. Luckily we heard his boat had gone over to America so he was alright."

Christian and John were married in London on 15 December 1943, but in early 1944 she was posted to Combined Operations HQ at Richmond Terrace, Whitehall. Her new role was under the command of Rear Admiral HE Horan.

"I was to be working on the actual maps of the planned landings [in France] and I was so sworn to secrecy that I could not even tell John what I was doing," says Christian. "Many of us were working on individual pieces of the enormous jigsaw; these were necessary preparations, but none of us knew or ever discussed what the others were working on.

"Meanwhile, in my tiny office beneath the stairs in Whitehall, I was making maps of the genuine landing places for the invasion. The locations were pinpointed for me on large-scale maps of France. My particular brief was to delineate everything that could be seen on every compass bearing, from each landing position and from the bridge of an approaching landing craft. This was so that any of our men approaching the coastline could use my map readings for identifiable confirmation of where they were – whether that was a main road, a chateau or a station. They would have my maps in front of them for reference.

"The big Ordnance Survey maps were spread out on the wall and showed railways, roads, churches, castles and every possible feature that would be visible to an incoming invader, and from every angle. It was intense and exciting work and obviously detail was vital. It was crucial that the maps were 100% accurate. There was an atmosphere of tension and excitement in the building as the weeks went on. Occasionally, I would actually see Winston Churchill himself on the stairs on my way into work. I can only imagine what sort of pressure he must have been feeling."

Christian's work on the D-Day landings was to be her last major operation, and she left the Wrens in 1945 after six years of service. "You had to do something during the war so I felt better doing something useful than doing nothing," she says. "I mean, I don't go on about it like I am a heroine in any way. I just got on with it as I could and just did a job I felt was very valuable."

Christian Lamb's book *Beyond the Sea* is available to purchase in bookstores and online

Image: Paul Farnes and the Battle of Britain Memorial

Image: Tom Garner

Image: Tom Garner

Image: Victor Gregg

VOICES OF WAR

History of War's features editor Tom Garner recalls his experiences of interviewing dozens of war veterans and survivors over the past five years

In January 2016, I drove to a small bungalow in rural Hampshire, England. Having only joined History of War the previous November, I was still new to the job, and on that particular day I was about to conduct my first ever interview. Although prepared, I was also nervous – I already knew that this was no ordinary interviewee.

When I knocked on the bungalow door, it opened to reveal a 96-year old man with a broad Cockney accent. It was Victor Gregg, a former rifleman and an extremely outspoken WWII veteran who had joined the British Army in 1936. A formidable character, Victor gruffly welcomed me into his home, and then spent hours regaling me with astonishing stories of his wartime service.

A regular soldier, Victor had fought extensively across North Africa and Europe. He participated in covert desert operations, fought in hand-to-hand combat, survived El Alamein, and parachuted into Italy before he was captured at Arnhem. A disruptive POW, Victor was sentenced to death by the Nazis in Dresden for sabotaging a factory. He instead survived the horrendous fire-bombing of the city in February 1945.

I had never met anyone like Victor before. He talked openly of how his experiences deeply traumatised him, and was highly critical of Allied commanders. I remember his contempt for Field Marshal Bernard Montgomery when he recalled, "Monty used to come round the different units giving you a lot of bullshit with his hat on." When I left he very firmly told me, "Don't you make me out to be a hero, because I'm not." Victor may have been intimidating, but when the article was published he unexpectedly emailed to thank me. It was the start of a tumultuous journey into history.

Documenting WWII

Since then, I have interviewed approximately 76 war veterans and survivors. They are witnesses to many of the major conflicts of the last 80 years, including Korea, Vietnam, the Cyprus Emergency, Cuban Revolution, Congo Crisis, the Falklands, Northern Ireland and Afghanistan. The interviewees have ranged in age from their early 40s to almost 100, and include both men and women. However, despite the range of conflicts, the majority of my encounters have been with WWII veterans.

I was born 42 years after WWII ended, and when I was a child that era seemed like a different world – almost ancient history. Nevertheless, we all live in the shadow of that conflict and – for good or ill – it has a vice-like grip on our imaginations. For a young historian, the opportunity to meet WWII veterans and survivors has been a rare privilege. I never dreamt that I would get to interview a Battle of Britain pilot, a Medal of Honor recipient from Iwo Jima and survivors from Dunkirk, Monte Cassino, D-Day, Arnhem and even the 'Great Escape'.

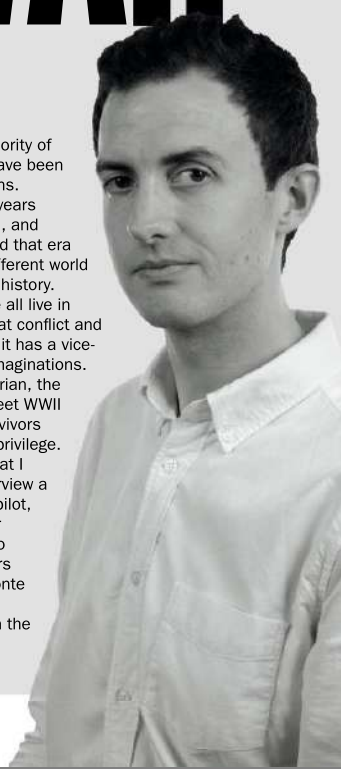


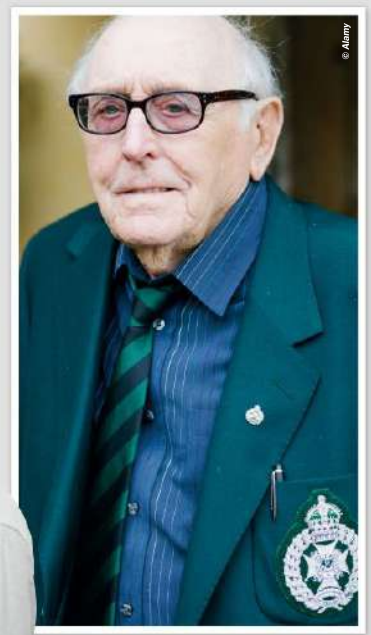
Image: Forces Help Africa

Image: Tom Garner

Image: Tom Garner

Image: Tom Garner

The most rewarding encounters have been with those previously neglected by popular history, such as Black veterans from Jamaica and Ghana. I was also fascinated to talk to women such as Bletchley Park veterans, Blitz survivors and a Red Army sniper.



© Alamy

Victor Gregg pictured at Henley Literary Festival in 2013. Victor sadly passed away on 12 October, 2021, just short of his 102nd birthday

"IF YOU WANT A REAL REMINDER OF WHY LIVING IN PEACE IS SO PRECIOUS, TALK TO A VETERAN"

However, with this unique access comes responsibility. Those who clearly remember WWII are now extremely elderly, but time has not diminished very painful memories. Veterans and survivors have frequently wept as they've told me what they experienced, including Holocaust survivors and prisoners of the Japanese. In situations like this, all you can do is hopefully do their stories justice.

It's distressing to see elderly men and women still suffering from the events of eight decades ago, but that is the trouble with history. You deal with cold reality rather than nostalgic myths. The facts of war are brutal, and do not spare you from the worst that human beings can inflict on each other. When you talk to the wartime generation, none of them describe themselves as heroes. Instead, you encounter honest emotional truths: solidarity borne of hardship, pragmatism in the face of grief, black humour and above all, naked fear.

The starkest warning

These qualities are not just confined to those who survived WWII, but other conflicts as well. However, these veterans' perspectives are different. Korean War soldiers fought in conditions similar to WWI, but feel that their sacrifices have been forgotten. American and Anzac Vietnam veterans struggle to reconcile their horrendous experiences with the knowledge that they were also defeated. The Falklands War may have happened almost four decades ago, but its mental and physical scars can still feel fresh.

If reporting all of these stories has taught me anything, it has reinforced my view that war should never be glorified in any form. We live in a world where films, television and literature adapt historical events into dramatic epics. Politicians also invoke past military 'glories' for their own means.

This mass consumption of warfare has distorted the lens through which we view conflict: if you want a real reminder of why living in peace is so precious, talk to a veteran or survivor. They are the Victor Greggs of this world: men and women whose memories may stretch back to the 1940s, or as recently to Iraq and Afghanistan. Oral testimony may be unreliable at times, but it is the most emotionally powerful primary source. When you listen to a witness, you are soon persuaded that war is a living nightmare, and the starkest warning from history.

***Above, left to right:** Paul Farnes (1918-2020) spoke to History of War in January 2017. He was the last surviving RAF ace fighter pilot from the Battle of Britain*

Ruth Bourne (1926-) worked for Bletchley Park as an operator on the famous 'Bombe' codebreaking machine that was designed by Alan Turing and Gordon Welchman

Tom Garner (centre) pictured with British and German veterans Graham Stevenson (left) and Karl Koenig (right), June 2018. They fought on opposing sides during the Battle of the Mareth Line in 1943, but later became good friends

Victor Gregg as a young rifleman in the late 1930s – he authored several books on his wartime experiences

Ghanaian WWII veteran Joseph Ashitey Hammond (1925-) fought with the British Fourteenth Army against the Japanese, and raised money for charity during the COVID-19 pandemic

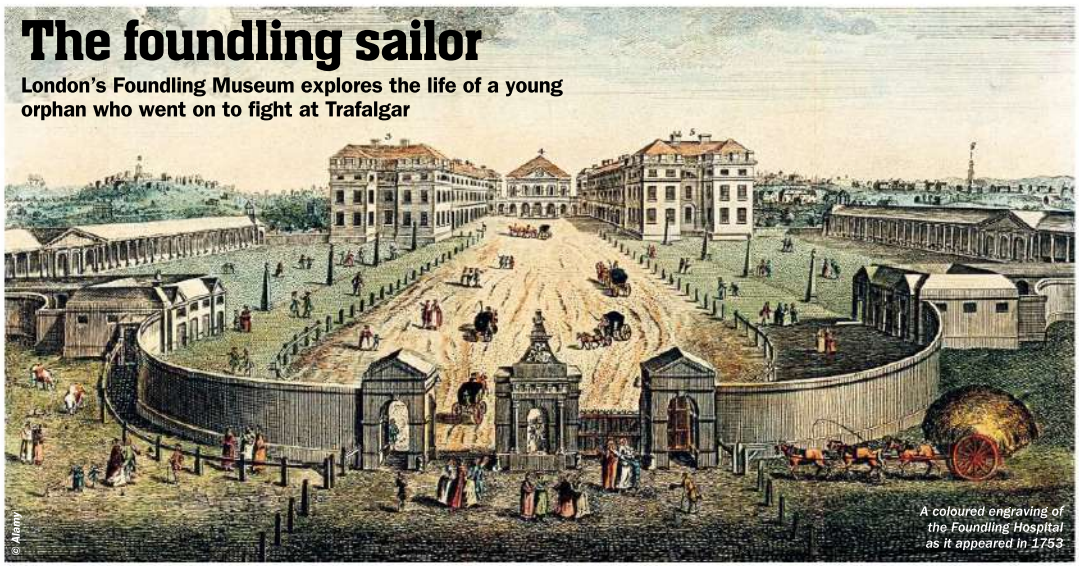
All three of these Irish UN veterans (Noel Carey, Tony Dykes and John Gorman) spoke to History of War in 2017 about fighting in the extraordinary Siege of Jadotville in 1961

MUSEUMS & EVENTS

Discover Britain's remembrance arboretum, a Viking castle in northern Scotland and the Napoleonic seaman who wrote a fascinating memoir about serving in Nelson's navy

The foundling sailor

London's Foundling Museum explores the life of a young orphan who went on to fight at Trafalgar



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A coloured engraving of the Foundling Hospital as it appeared in 1753

Located in Brunswick Square, London, the Foundling Museum tells the story of the Foundling Hospital, Britain's first home for children at risk of abandonment. Originally the creation of philanthropist Thomas Coram, after years of campaigning the hospital was founded in 1739 with a Royal Charter from King George II. The hospital's legacy continues with the Thomas Coram Foundation for Children, while the museum itself was opened in 2004.

The hospital contributed greatly to Britain's armed forces during the 1700s by providing foundling boys to serve as soldiers and sailors. One of these children, George King, is now the focus of a new exhibition at the museum called Fighting Talk: One Man's Journey From Abandonment To Trafalgar, which runs between 15 October 2021 to 27 February 2022.

King (1787-1857) was a working-class child who was taught to read and write at the hospital. He used his literacy to later write an autobiography of his experiences of conscription in the Royal Navy. His naval career saw him travel the world to the Mediterranean, Caribbean, Brazil and Argentina from 1804, and he vividly described life below decks. King also survived bloody battles, including Trafalgar, where he fought aboard HMS Polyphemus. This ship took 200 French prisoners and towed HMS Victory back to Gibraltar with Horatio Nelson's body on board.

The original manuscript of his autobiography is being displayed alongside other rare naval objects from the period. This includes a fragment of the flag from Nelson's coffin and correspondence between the hospital's matron and Lady Emma Hamilton. The mental and physical toll of King's life at sea are uncovered, with indications he suffered from PTSD after witnessing close-quarters combat.

The exhibition is also displaying two rare Naval General Service Medals that belonged to King and another foundling, William Smith, who served on HMS Victory. An audiobook of King's autobiography is also available to download for free from the museum's website during the exhibition's duration.

Contemporary artist and photographer Ingrid Pollard will reflect on the Foundling Hospital's connections with empire, trade and the navy by looking at dialogues between past and present. She will show newly commissioned work that responds directly to King's autobiography as well as presenting existing pieces.

The exhibition includes new research that expands the story of the Foundling Museum towards a more inclusive global history. By examining the realities of foundling apprentices and the impact their labour had on Britain's transformation into a global super-power, Fighting Talk brings a new perspective to our understanding of Georgian society and the lives of its working-class citizens.

For more information visit:
www.foundlingmuseum.org.uk

© Alamy

An interior view of a children's exhibition at the Foundling Museum

Trees of remembrance

Located in the English Midlands, the National Memorial Arboretum is the United Kingdom's site of remembrance for Britain's armed forces

The National Memorial Arboretum (NMA) is a British site of national remembrance at Alrewas near Lichfield, Staffordshire. A part of the Royal British Legion, the Arboretum aims to ensure that the unique contribution of Britain's armed forces is never forgotten. Located on a 150-acre visitor site on the edge of the National Forest, the Arboretum contains 400 memorials that are nestled among approximately 25,000 trees. It welcomes over 300,000 visitors each year, including 20,000 young people who come for formal and informal learning visits.

Visitors can experience riverside walks and participate in a wide variety of daily activities. These include guided walks, land train tours, memorial talks, exhibitions and buggy tours. Around 250 events take place at the Arboretum each year, with November being a busy month for commemorations.

On Thursday 11 November 2021, a service will be held on the Armed Forces Memorial at 11am to commemorate Armistice Day. Because of the Covid-19 pandemic all tickets are now allocated but it will still be possible to visit the Arboretum on 11 November. The NMA will also be broadcasting its service via its YouTube channel and Facebook page for those unable to attend the service on that day.

For more information about the Arboretum and other events visit: www.thenma.org.uk

An aerial view of the National Memorial Arboretum

Prince Harry looks at the Armed Forces Memorial on Armistice Day, 11 November 2016

Orkney's Norse fortress

Cubbie Roo's Castle is a very rare ruined medieval fortification that was built at a time when the Orkney Islands were ruled by the Kingdom of Norway

Wyre is one of the smallest inhabited islands in the Orkney Islands, with a population of just five people. It is also the location of one of Scotland's oldest and most unique fortresses: Cubbie Roo's Castle. The Orkneys were part of Norway from 875 until 1472 and Cubbie Roo's Castle was built around the years 1145-50. It's mentioned in the *Orkneyinga Saga* where it is described as a "fine stone castle". The saga also records that it was built by a Norwegian named Kolbein Hruga who also apparently lived there.

The separate *King Haakon's Saga* describes the castle as "a very unhandy place to attack" and its main building outlines remain well preserved along with its preserved ditches and ramparts. Described as "an ancient labyrinth", Cubbie Roo's Castle's existence is of international significance. It is one of only two Norse castles excavated in Britain, which is extraordinary considering that there are no Norse castles in Scandinavia at all.

Now in the care of Historic Scotland, Cubbie Roo's Castle is free to visit and open all year round. It is located half a mile from the pier on Wyre and can be reached by ferry from Kirkwall, the largest town on Mainland Orkney.

For more information visit: www.historicenvironment.scot

The visible stone and earthwork defences of Cubbie Roo's Castle

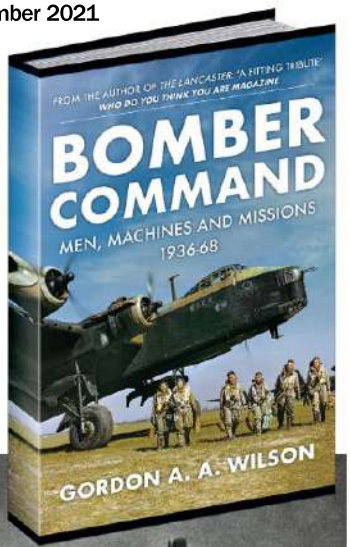
REVIEWS

Our pick of the latest military history books and films

BOMBER COMMAND

THE CELEBRATED RAF UNIT AND ITS STRATEGIC ROLE FROM THE SECOND WORLD WAR TO THE COLD WAR YEARS IS BROUGHT TO LIFE THROUGH THE MEN, MACHINES AND EXPLOITS THAT MADE IT LEGENDARY

Author: Gordon A.A. Wilson **Publisher:** Amberley **Price:** £20 **On sale:** November 2021


FROM THE AUTHOR OF THE LANCASTER: 'A FITTING TRIBUTE'
WHO DO YOU THINK YOU ARE MAGAZINE
BOMBER COMMAND
MEN, MACHINES AND MISSIONS
1936-68
GORDON A. A. WILSON

Gordon A.A. Wilson is uniquely qualified to write the story of Bomber Command's 32-year history. A retired military pilot, Wilson has flown target aircraft on secret missions for the Canadian Air Force 414 Electronic Warfare Squadron. In his book, the author traces Bomber Command's trajectory, from its days defending Britain from wartime aerial attack, to its role as a key part of the Allied victory over Nazi Germany, and beyond into the early Cold War period.

From the moment in September 1939 when Neville Chamberlain told the British people "this country is at war with Germany", it was clear that Bomber Command would be required to perform tasks it had until then only practised. Little more than an hour after the declaration of war, the men and machines sprung into action. A Squadron Bristol Blenheim Mk. IV took off from Royal Air Force Wyton on a photo-reconnaissance of German naval ships north of Wilhelmshaven. Shortly thereafter a small force of ten Armstrong Whitworth Whitleys dropped 5.4 million leaflets on Germany. This was the start of nearly six years of wartime operations and about 390,000 sorties, ending with the final night attack on the Baltic port of Kiel, in May 1945.

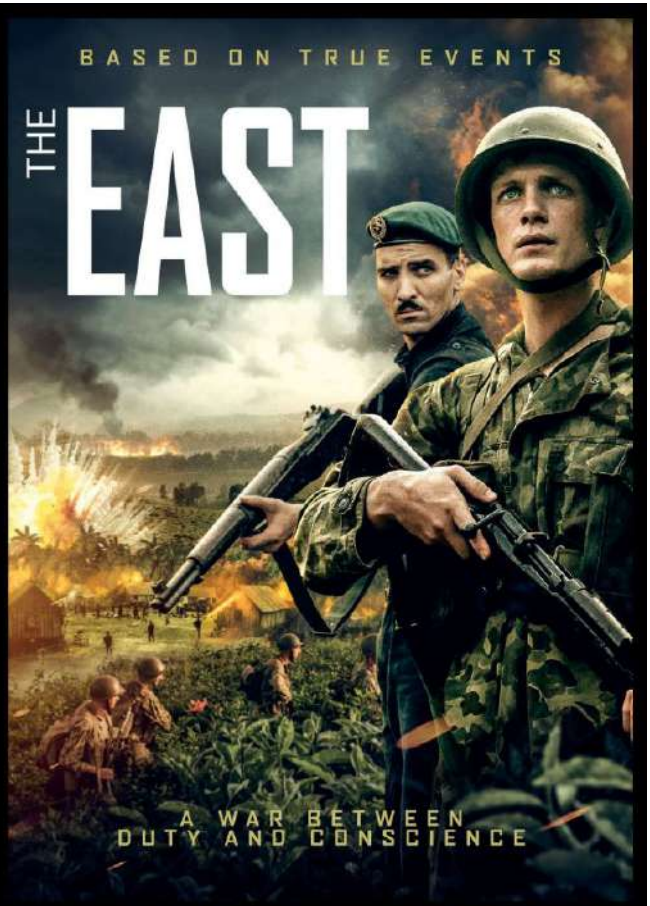
Wilson brings to the fore the Avro Lancaster and Handley Page Halifax bombers. In early 1942, as missions penetrated deeper into Germany, these planes became the night owls of the RAF bomber force due to the unavailability of long-range fighter daylight escorts. The author also highlights the deadly risks of night-time bombings over enemy territory: there were more casualties in the March 1944 raid on Nuremberg than were sustained by Fighter Command during the entire Battle of Britain. **JS**

Bomber Command played a vital role as the Allies took the war to Germany

THE EAST

HITTING MANY OF THE FAMILIAR TROPES OF CLASSIC VIETNAM WAR FILMS, THIS MOVIE EXPLORES THE MUCH-NEGLECTED CONFLICT IN THE DUTCH EAST-INDIES

Director: Jim Taihuttu Studio: Blue Finch Films Starring: Martijn Lakemeier, Marwan Kenzari Released: On digital download now

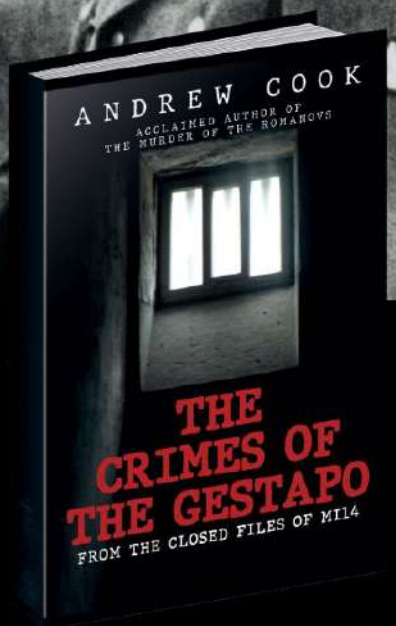


The East (*De Oost*) tells the story of the aftermath of WWII in the Dutch East Indies and the fight for Indonesian independence (1945-49). Director Jim Taihuttu presents a much-neglected period of history that's rarely portrayed on film. Equipment and uniforms all look authentic and we see the more mundane side of military service, such as the issuing of equipment and camp life, before the action starts and the situation deteriorates. Deployed to a remote camp, Johann (played by Martijn Lakemeier) attempts to escape the stigma of German collaborators (who include his own father). There is friction between those who were in the Resistance and those who were not, as well as between the Japanese and the Dutch, and the rebels.

The film takes on an anti-colonialist stance as the situation becomes more murky and Johan becomes involved in clandestine operations. He grows more and more disillusioned, first at inaction and then at the increase in brutality.

This is a complex story – it's not so much an anti-war film as an anti-colonial film that's told from the disillusionment of the coloniser rather than the righteousness of the independence fighter. We see Johan go from an innocent who wants to see things done, to a troubled veteran who has seen and done too much and can't adjust to civilian life. Some of the allegories here are more to do with later 20th and 21st century conflicts and this very much comes across as a Dutch Vietnam war film. It's well worth your time. **MD**

Adolf Hitler shakes hands with Gestapo leader Heinrich Himmler



THE CRIMES OF THE GESTAPO

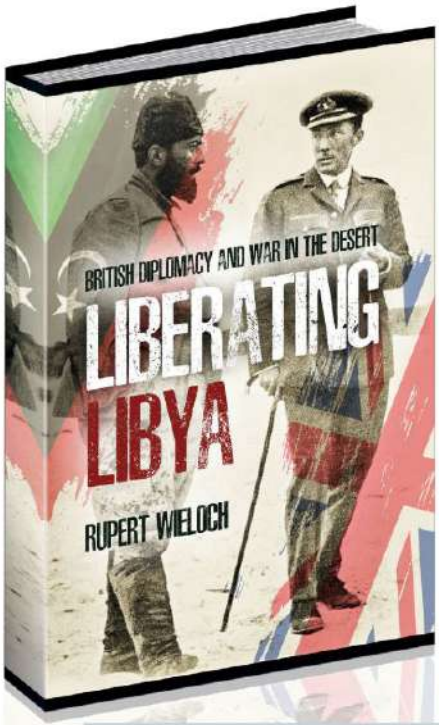
THE CRIMINAL ACTIVITIES OF THE GESTAPO, THE NAZIS' LEADING INSTRUMENT OF REPRESSION, TORTURE AND EXECUTION, REVEALED IN THE INTELLIGENCE FILES OF MI14

Author: Andrew Cook **Publisher:** Amberley **Price:** £20 **On sale:** November 2021

Germany under Adolf Hitler was essentially a police state, and the organisation charged with enforcing the state's absolute powers was the Gestapo, which was set up in 1933 after the advent of National Socialism. The crimes and atrocities carried out in Germany and in Nazi-occupied Europe during World War II were largely carried out by the Gestapo, which controlled the extermination and concentration camps.

Andrew Cook brings to light the inner workings of the Gestapo he unearthed from the closed files of MI14, the wartime intelligence department created on Churchill's orders shortly after his appointment as prime minister. As Cook points out in this meticulously researched book, most people are probably as unaware of MI14 and the critical intelligence role it played in the war as they are universally aware of the name and sinister reputation of the Gestapo.

The files reveal in meticulous detail the Gestapo's duties and organisational structure, under the command of the malevolent Heinrich Himmler. What was undeniable is that the Gestapo could literally get away with murder. One internal document cites a 1938 Hitler proclamation that removed even theoretical legal limitations, by pointing at the 'unwritten law' of Germany as expressed in the will of the Party Leader. Since the Gestapo was in no way subject to veto, review or advice by the judiciary, its powers were unlimited in theory and in practice. Intelligence-gathering is as old as human history. Only the Gestapo, originally a policing rather than military organisation, had exploited this system to subdue an entire populace. **JS**



LIBERATING LIBYA

EXPLORE LIBYA'S TUMULTUOUS 2,500-YEAR HISTORY, FROM ANCIENT GREEK SETTLERS TO THE BATTLEFIELDS OF THE SECOND WORLD WAR AND THE ARAB WINTER UPHEAVALS OF THE 21ST CENTURY

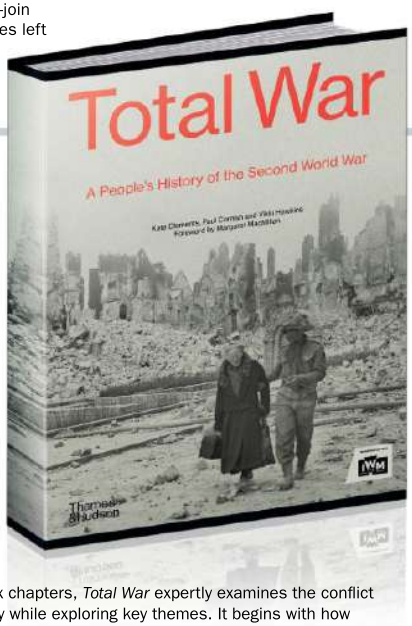
Author: Rupert Wieloch **Publisher:** Casemate **Price:** £25 **On sale:** Out now

Rupert Wieloch draws on his extensive knowledge of Libya to unveil the drama of Britain's long involvement with the country and illustrate the roles national security and defence have played in the UK's policy towards it. The book also illustrates the lack of awareness that to a large extent has surrounded the relationship between the two countries. The author cites as an example the role played by Libyans in the Second World War. It is widely accepted that many Libyans were in the pay of the Italian army, but we learn that in Cyrenaica the majority of the population supported the Allies and, where they could, helped special forces to raid Rommel's supply lines. Likewise, many Libyans living in the rugged mountains and harsh desert assisted thousands of disorientated British soldiers as they attempted to re-join their units after rapid armoured advances left them behind enemy lines.

This is not the only example of collective amnesia Wieloch brings to light. In 1967, the American consul in Benghazi was forced to barricade himself in the consulate and began to destroy secret US documents. After a ten-hour siege, he was rescued by British soldiers. This pivotal month, which proved to be a watershed in the relationship between Libya and the West, was subsequently obscured by tumultuous events, including the coup that brought Muammar Gaddafi to power.

Libya as a country and as a concept has been meaningfully shaped and formed by its interactions with the United Kingdom. As the author shows, Britons have worked together with Libyans over the last two centuries to help create and then defend, reconquer and liberate their country. **JS**

TOTAL WAR
A PEOPLE'S HISTORY OF THE SECOND WORLD WAR



PACKED WITH 390 ILLUSTRATIONS, THIS BOOK CHRONICLES THE JOURNEY OF ORDINARY PEOPLE DURING THE MOST EXTRAORDINARY PERIOD OF RECENT HISTORY

Author: Kate Clements, Paul Cornish, Vikki Hawkins
Publisher: Thames & Hudson **Price:** £35 **On sale:** Out now

What is total war? This is the first question the book attempts to tackle. As you might expect there is no simple answer. Nevertheless, total war can be characterised by its complete mobilisation of economies and societies to wage war. Civilians become equally as important as combatants, and as the authors chillingly remind us here, in WWII more non-combatants died than those fighting in uniform.

The authors also rightly point out that for many the Second World War began before 1939. Ethiopia had been occupied by the Italians since 1935 and China and Japan had already been fighting for three years by the time hostilities broke out in Europe. Similarly, they point out that the death and suffering simply did not come to an end in 1945.

Split into six chapters, *Total War* expertly examines the conflict chronologically while exploring key themes. It begins with how the peace was lost then considers how war engulfed Europe, how it became a global war, and how victory for the Allies was finally achieved. However, perhaps even more importantly it considers the aftermath of the war and its legacies that we still live with today.

Well-researched and engagingly written, the book is richly illustrated throughout with almost 400 images, mostly from the Imperial War Museum's incredible collection. These include period photographs, detailed maps, vibrant infographics, and intriguing pictures of period artefacts. *Total War* also explores the ordinary people who experienced the conflict, from adults who served on the frontline to children caught up in the brutality of war. **MS**

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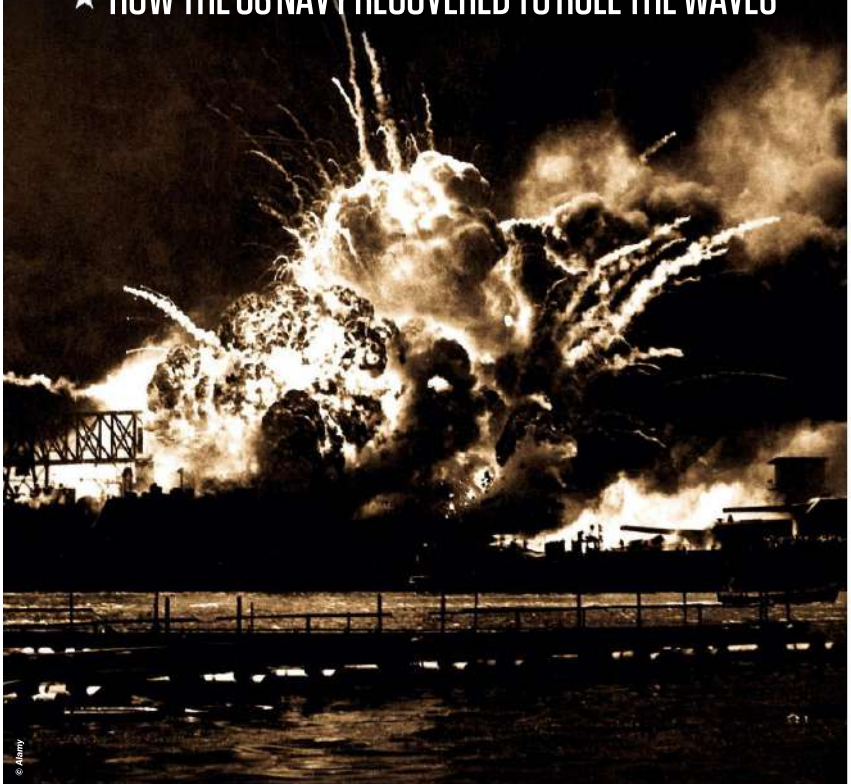
★ LAST STANDS ON GUAM & WAKE ISLAND
★ HOW THE US NAVY RECOVERED TO RULE THE WAVES



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ON SALE 25 NOVEMBER

HISTORY OF WAR

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Printed by William Gibbons & Sons Ltd

Distributed by Marketforce, 5 Churchill Place, Canary Wharf, London, E14 5HU www.marketforce.co.uk Tel: 0203 787 9060

ISSN 2054-376X

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History of War (ISSN 2054-376X) October, Issue 100, is published monthly with an extra issue in October by Future Publishing, Quay House, The Ambury, Bath, BA1 1UA, UK The US annual subscription price is $171.60 Airfreight and mailing in the USA by agent named World Container Inc., c/o BBT 150-15 183rd St, Jamaica, NY 11413, USA. Application to Mail at Periodicals Postage Prices is Pending at Brooklyn NY 11256 POSTMASTER: Send address changes to History of War, World Container Inc., c/o BBT 150-15 183rd St, Jamaica, NY 11413, USA Subscription records are maintained at Future Publishing, c/o Air Business Subscriptions, Rockwood House, Perrymount Road, Haywards Heath, West Sussex, RH16 3DH. UK

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GEORGE IV'S SWORD

Great Britain's notoriously decadent monarch gifted this bladed weapon to a friend while he was Prince of Wales

In September 2021, a 1796 Pattern British infantry officer's sword was discovered among items at Weston Hall, the seat of the famous Sitwell family in Northamptonshire, England. The sword, which is inscribed "Tatham to his Majesty" was made by Henry Tatham, a gun-maker and sword-cutler who worked in Charing Cross, London.

The bill for this sword cannot be identified but it is believed to be associated with King George IV. George ruled the United Kingdom and Hanover as king during 1820-30 but acted as 'Prince Regent' for his mentally ill father King George III from 1811. Before that he had a prolonged period as Prince of Wales and led a highly extravagant lifestyle.

George was an infamous spendthrift with his royal wallet extending to buying various military items. For example, on 17 July 1799 he was invoiced for several swords and guns that amounted to £72, 17 shillings and six pence. These included a "Spanish Sword", "A silver gilt Dress Sword from the late King of France's Cabinet", "A very old German rifle", "An Old English Sword and "A very elegant silver mounted gun".

Only five bills from Tatham exist in the Royal Archives but they show that he was supplying swords to George from 1799 until at least 1826. It is possible that the then prince gifted the sword to his trusted friend and confidant John Hely-Hutchinson, 2nd Earl of Donoughmore. The Anglo-Irish aristocrat served in the British Army from 1774, fought in expeditions to the Netherlands and Egypt and rose to the rank of general in 1813.

"GEORGE WAS AN INFAMOUS SPENDTHRIFT WITH HIS ROYAL WALLET EXTENDING TO BUYING VARIOUS MILITARY ITEMS"

DREWEATTS
EST. 1759

The sword is being auctioned, along with other discoveries from Weston Hall, in a vast sale at Dreweatts in Donnington Priory, Newbury on 16 November 2021. For more information visit:

www.dreweatts.com

The sword bears Henry Tatham's London address and the main inscription which states, "Tatham to his Majesty"

George IV was a compulsive liar to the point of being delusional. He famously 'reminisced' about fighting at the Battle of Waterloo with the Duke of Wellington despite the fact he wasn't there

The 1796 Pattern sword for British infantry officers was produced for over 25 years but offered little hand protection with a thin and flimsy blade

NEW MOULD

1:35

AIRFIX

CROMWELL Mk.IV

A1373 CROMWELL Mk.IV

The Cromwell can trace its history back to late 1940 and the decision to find a replacement for the widely used Crusader tank. Due to a relatively protracted development however, there can be some confusion with these tanks, as similar looking machines were named Centaur and Cromwell, with both being derived from the A24 Cruiser Mark VII Cavalier. The A27M Cromwell Mk.IV was the most heavily produced version of the new Cruiser Tank Mk.VIII and matched the Centaur hull with the highly effective Rolls Royce Meteor engine (A27Meteor), which allowed the tank to travel at impressively high speeds. The tank also featured a quick firing 75mm gun, which was a re-bored version of the British 6 pounder gun and allowed the commander to have the option of using American produced armour piercing or high explosive rounds. Although originally introduced in November 1943, persistent problems with the new gun's operation meant that the Mk.IV would not make its combat introduction until the Normandy landings in June 1944, where its speed and mobility would complement the Sherman tanks. During the savage fighting of the Normandy battlefield, the excellent mobility of the Cromwell was somewhat nullified and even worse than that, as tanks were forced to climb these steep banks, they exposed their vulnerable undersides to potential armour piercing Panzerfaust attack. The simple solution was to attach a steel blade 'hedge cutter' to the front of the tank, which allowed the commander to scythe through the obstacle, keeping his tank level and still able to bring his guns to bear. This addition even provided some welcome natural foliage camouflage for the tank, as long as the bushes it didn't obstruct his gun aiming sights.

CROMWELL Mk.IV
1st Royal Tank Regiment, 7th Armoured Division, British Army, Europe, 1944/45.

CROMWELL Mk.IV
Northamptonshire Yeomanry, 11th Armoured Division, British Army, Europe, 1944/45.

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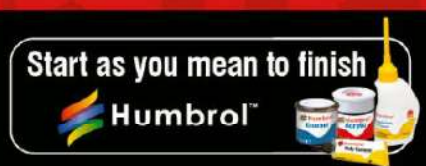

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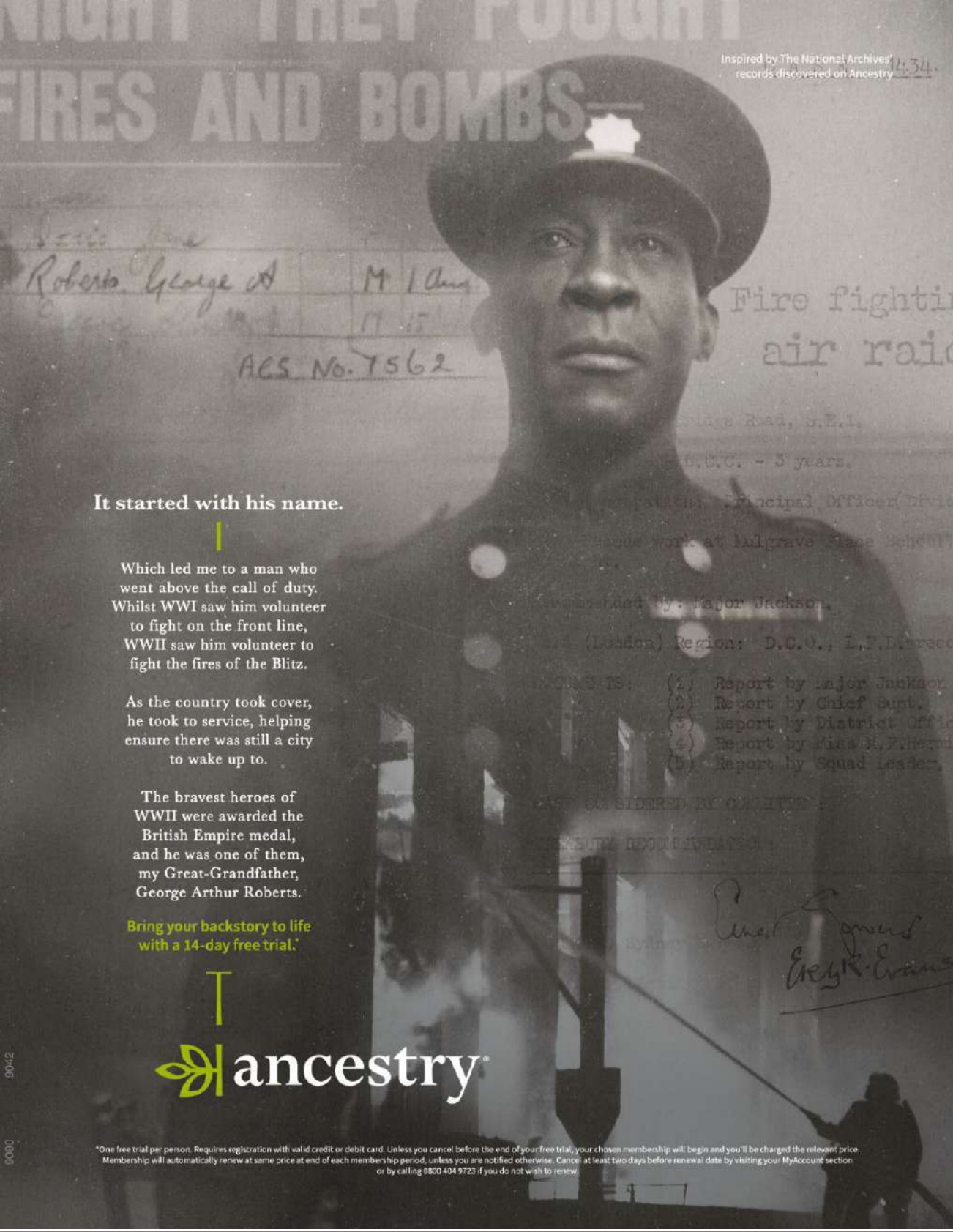
Inspired by The National Archives' records discovered on Ancestry
FIRES AND BOMBS
ACS No. 7562
It started with his name.
Which led me to a man who went above the call of duty. Whilst WWI saw him volunteer to fight on the front line, WWII saw him volunteer to fight the fires of the Blitz.
As the country took cover, he took to service, helping ensure there was still a city to wake up to.
The bravest heroes of WWII were awarded the British Empire medal, and he was one of them, my Great-Grandfather, George Arthur Roberts.
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